UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

The Impact of Project Sponsors' Decisions on the Success of Projects: An Action Research Study

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

The researcher, Malek Al Hawsah, declares that this thesis research study represents original work that has not been previously submitted in support of an application for degree or academic qualifications. All work pertaining to other authors used within this thesis is identified as such, with appropriate citations, references and acknowledgement of the authors.

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ABSTRACT

Title: The Impact of Project Sponsors' Decisions on the Success of Projects: An Action Research Study

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This action research was conducted to explore the impact of project sponsors' decisions on the success of three projects. My organisation had a problem concerning delays in its projects. The management undertook different approaches to support the projects. One action taken was assigning a project sponsor. It was observed, however, that at times the project sponsor made decisions that contributed to the projects' failure. This study examines how the project sponsors' decisions affected the success of the projects and identifies the causes of the project sponsors' behaviours and decisions. Moreover, it explores the strategies the research participants and I can use to support the sponsor in facilitating project success.

I used a qualitative case study methodology and action research approach to explore the decisions of the project sponsor in the context of three megaprojects. The study involved 13 research participants. The data were collected through an interview and observations. The data analysis revealed that, of the 78 identified project issues, 27, or 34%, were caused primarily by the decisions of the project's sponsor. The research found three significant project sponsor decisions that affected the success of the projects: the decision to request a low budget for Project A, the decision to set an unrealistic project deadline and the project sponsor's level of support for the project.

The research identified three primary causes of the project sponsor's behaviours and decisions. They include the lack of project management knowledge and experience, the effect of the organisational culture and the desire of the project sponsor to achieve his own personal objectives. The research results revealed many strategies the research participants and I can use to influence the decisions and behaviours of the project sponsor.

In three action cycles, the research participants and I were able to implement approaches that influenced some of the project sponsor's beliefs and assumptions. These actions helped the organisation more effectively manage projects and minimise project delays.

The research contributes to actionable knowledge by developing a successful project sponsor framework. The framework guides management, the project sponsor and the project manager in taking relevant actions to develop project sponsors and letting them act in the interest of project success. It additionally guides management in fostering the organisational conditions that promote a successful project sponsorship.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AHP	Analytical Hierarchy Process
APM	Association for Project Management
AVS	Associated Value Specialist
BS	Bachelor's Degree
CCE	Certified Cost Engineer
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CPM	Critical Path Method
EPC	Engineering Procurement and Construction
GE	General Electric
GS	General Services
HR	Human Resources
IPA	Independent Project Analysis
IRR	Internal Rate of Return
IT	Information Technology
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MBA	Master of Business Administration
NoA	Notice of Award
NPV	Net Present Value
OGC	Office of Government Commerce
PDD	Project Development Department
PED	Project Execution Department
PO	Purchase Order
PMO	Project Management Office
PHD	Doctor of Philosophy
PIS	Participant Information Sheet
PM	Project Management
PMI	Project Management Insinuate
PMP	Project Management Professional
PMT	Project Management Team
PRET	Programme Review Evaluation Technique
PS	Project Sponsor
ROI	Return on Investment
UK	United Kingdom
UoL	University of Liverpool
VP	Vice President

1. Purpose and Rationale of the Study

1.1 Introduction

The business world is changing rapidly, with new organisations beginning to dominate the market (Verzuh, 1999). Organisations that want to survive in this competitive marketplace must strive for continuous improvement (Shenhar et al., 2007). Inert organisations cannot survive in today's fast-changing market (Pryor et al., 2008). Therefore, for organisations to remain competitive, they need to cope with rapid technological change. Restructuring, developing new strategies and introducing new products are all mechanisms that organisations can employ to keep themselves competitive (Verzuh, 1999). Some organisational changes, especially the development of new products, are enabled by executing industrial megaprojects: projects where organisations invest huge amounts of capital. Lewis (2000) pointed out that managing successful projects should be a priority for organisations seeking to cope with rapid market changes. Most of an organisation's assets are created through projects (Merrow, 2011), and megaprojects are strategically vital, as they enable organisations to achieve their objectives. The management of industrial megaprojects is complex, however, as it involves interactions among many parties, such as the owner, contractors, designers, government agencies, vendors and suppliers. To execute successful projects, organisations must manage the issues and challenges that arise during the project life cycle. One significant megaproject challenge is delay. Megaproject delays can have significant implications for organisations. They may hinder growth and development, increase expenses or affect the organisation's competitive position. It is therefore crucial for organisations to study and understand all the factors that may affect project schedules.

Action research is one of the methodologies organisations can use to investigate project delays (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). Action research is a scientific, problem-solving methodology that organisations can use to address practical organisational issues. (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010). I found action research a suitable approach for studying megaprojects, as it provides a mechanism for understanding the issue, identifying its causes, taking actions to solve it and evaluating the effectiveness of the actions taken to resolve the issue. Moreover, projects are dynamic and complex (Merrow, 2011) and require a flexible and dynamic research method, such as action research, to address this complexity.

This action research study investigates the effect of the project sponsor on the success of projects. Project sponsors are the champions of projects. They have significant influence on their projects' success (James et al., 2013). They make decisions that can make or break a project (O'Brochta, 2010).

Therefore, it is essential to explore the role of the project sponsor and understand how he/she can influence a project's success.

This chapter provides background information about the research. It discusses the importance of the project sponsor's role in the project's success. First, the process used to identify the research problem is explained. Then, the research objectives and questions are presented. Finally, the chapter discusses the rationale for using action research as a core research approach.

1.2 Organisational Background

The Saudi government originally established the organisation in question as a state-owned enterprise and privatised it in 1997. Accordingly, management introduced strategic changes (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995) to improve its services, gain new markets and open new job opportunities for Saudis or promote Saudisation (the term used to encourage organisations working in Saudi Arabia to employ Saudi citizens). The government mandated that all private organisations employ a certain percentage of Saudis, depending on the size and speciality of each organisation. When this organisation was privatised, the government retained 70% of the shares, with the remaining 30% listed on the Saudi Arabian stock market. The organisation's board appointed a new chief executive officer (CEO) to help boost their ambitious plan to diversify the organisation's investments.

The organisation developed new vision and mission statements to cope with market changes and contribute to Saudi Arabia's economy. It created three new strategic business units and a new project management division and restructured the existing corporate functions to achieve these objectives. The changes implemented created a positive and dynamic environment where all resources and capabilities are focused on achieving the new organisational objectives. As a result, several investment opportunities were identified, and several projects were initiated. New Saudi staff, including experienced project professionals, were hired to manage the new megaprojects.

The organisation initiated three megaprojects, A, B and C, in 2011, 2012 and 2013, respectively. These projects were strategic and significant to the growth of the organisation. Therefore, they needed to be completed as planned to enable the organisation to achieve the new strategic objectives. The purposes of projects A and C were to build manufacturing plants. The scopes of the projects included the engineering, procurement, and construction of the processing plants and support facilities such as infrastructure, roads, and process buildings. The scope of project B was to build a water pipeline, including the construction of pumping stations to supply the processing plant constructed by project C with the required processing water. All projects followed the Stage-Gate approach, where initial feasibility studies were completed, and then basic engineering was performed, followed by detailed engineering, procurement, construction, commissioning and start-up, and, finally, project closeout.

Management was eager to expedite the execution of these projects to enable the new strategy and gain a market advantage. Each project suffered, however, from various scheduling delay issues. Section 1.5 provides a detailed description of the issues the project team experienced while managing these projects. Management made strategic decisions to help mitigate the projects' delay issues, but these actions were not sufficient to significantly improve the delivery of the projects.

In the following section, I discuss my role as the primary researcher in this study and how I managed my dual roles as both an insider researcher and an organisational employee.

1.3 The Researcher's Role

At the time the new organisation's strategy was approved, the project department was managing three projects. These projects were at various phases of the development stage (scoping, pre-feasibility, feasibility and basic engineering). All, however, struggled to progress to the next phase. Management realised the need to take corrective action to facilitate the projects' progress and, thereby, the achievement of the new strategy and objectives. The first action taken was to restructure the project department. Instead of having one department manage projects, two departments were established: the Project Development Department (PDD), which was responsible for managing the development phases of projects (concept through to the completion of basic engineering packages) and the Project Execution Department (PED), responsible for managing the execution phases of projects (detailed engineering, procurement and construction). A project director headed each department, and the intention was to staff them with appropriate resources to enable each department to fulfil its new responsibilities. As the organisation did not have sufficient resources to staff the two departments, the decision was made to assign most existing staff to the PDD and hire new experienced employees to staff the PED. This restructuring helped each department focus on its responsibilities. It also, however, created other challenges: for example, co-ordination and communication between the two departments became an issue due to their lack of clear roles and responsibilities.

I was one of the new project managers hired to join the PED. I was responsible for managing Project A and a member of the Project Management Office (PMO), which was responsible for guiding the project teams through the successful execution of the projects. The PED project director was the chair of the PMO. Other PMO members included two project managers, an engineering manager, a planning and control manager and a construction manager.

When I began my duties managing the project activities, I noticed that there were no procedures to guide the project's execution. Moreover, the support departments, such as Finance, Procurement and Human Resources, had not planned to provide services to the project teams. This situation created

chaos, confusion and frustration. The support departments were not used to supporting fast-track megaprojects. Accordingly, the services they provided were slow and affected the project's progress. Management appointed a steering committee to support the project teams and facilitate the execution of the projects. The steering committee consisted of four executives and was chaired by the project sponsor. Figure 1.1 illustrates the relationship between the PED and the steering committee.

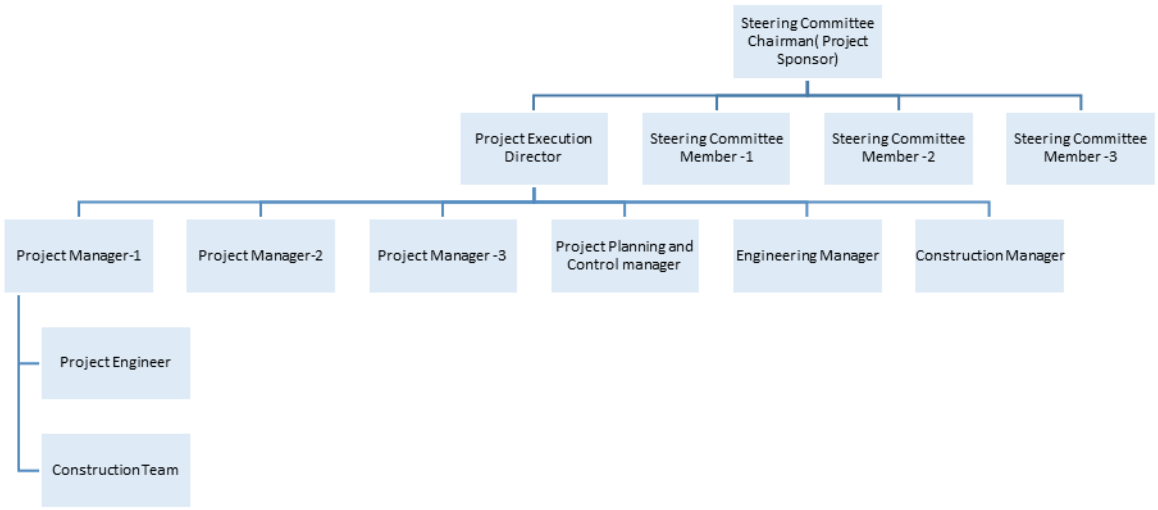

Figure 1.1: Project execution organisation. (Source: project records.)

Monthly meetings were scheduled for the project managers to brief the steering committee on the project's progress, escalate issues and request support. After some time, however, it appeared that the project sponsor was not providing the support expected to the project teams. The project sponsor's support is vital to the success of projects (Kemp, 2004). I worried that I might not be able to meet the project's objectives if did not get the required support from the project's sponsor. Therefore, I decided to conduct this research to explore the role of the project sponsor and understand how I could influence the project sponsor to support projects. As an insider researcher, I had the advantage of being able to access the project documents and information, although, as Roth et al. (2007) have argued, being too close to the data might not necessarily enable the researcher to evaluate the data objectively. Another disadvantage of being close to the data materialises during the interview: the researcher could assume too much, preventing him/her from asking deep, clarifying questions (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010). This position gave me greater confidence in understanding the organisational structure and policies. The difficulties of being an insider researcher relate to overcoming one's preunderstanding (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010). To overcome the possible effect of my preunderstanding, I tried to differentiate between my role as a researcher and my operational

role as an employee of the organisation. I was aware of the effect of emotions on judgement and interventions. Therefore, it was important for me to manage my emotions as much as possible and instead rely on evidence and consider the facts while making judgements (Coghlan, 2008). Another difficulty was overcoming organisational politics, which I tried to do by being flexible and managing the political influence on my decisions. I understood that I might face resistance to change. Therefore, I was eager to promote my credibility and gain trust (Bjorkman and Sundgren, 2005).

The next section briefly discusses the role of the project sponsor in projects. A more detailed review of the project sponsor's role is covered in the second chapter.

1.4 The Project Sponsor's Role in Projects

The project sponsor's role is critical to the success of megaprojects (Bryde, 2008). Scholars who have studied the project sponsor role have confirmed that there is a dearth of literature examining the importance of this role, including the project sponsor's contribution to a project's failures (Helm and Remington, 2005; Crawford et al., 2008; Kloppenborg et al., 2009). For example, Kloppenborg et al. (2006) conducted five studies investigating the role of the project sponsor in a project's five phases (Kloppenborg et al., 2006, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2014). Each study aimed to identify the key roles the project sponsor should play in each phase. Ong et al. (2009) emphasised the importance of leadership to a project's success. James et al. (2013) wrote a book providing project sponsorship strategies that project managers can use to work with different project sponsors' personalities.

Crawford et al. (2008) developed a situational project sponsorship model. They classified the role of the project sponsor into two main categories: governance and support. Merrow (2011) identified seven mistakes that organisations make that lead projects to fail; most of these mistakes are made by executives. These mistakes relate to the desire of project executives to complete projects unrealistically quickly and at the lowest possible cost. Furthermore, there are times when project executives are greedy to retain all the credit for themselves. They do not want to spend money up front to define the project's requirements and are unwilling to take any project risks. Instead, they want contractors to carry all project risks. (Merrow, 2011). All of these mistakes are typical in organisations. Unfortunately, the executives who make these mistakes do not realise the effect of their decisions on the project's success (Melymuka, 2004). They think they are helping projects to succeed when they are actually increasing their failure rates.

The literature discussing the project sponsor's role has explored various aspects related to the project sponsor, such as their characteristics, attributes and key roles and the importance of this role to the project's success. Project sponsors, however, sometimes make decisions or direct the project team to take specific actions that, in their view, will support the projects. In reality, however, they actually

hinder the project's progress (James et al., 2013). For example, sometimes project sponsors set unrealistic project budgets and durations (Merrow, 2011). In doing so, they believe they are managing and controlling the execution of the project, but in fact they are introducing entirely new challenges for the project team. Sometimes the project team cannot manage or overcome the challenges, leading projects to fail.

In Saudi Arabia, the studies discussing the causes of project delays (Alhoweish, 2011; Assaf and Al-Hejji, 2006; Elawi et al., 2016) have sorted these causes into categories, such as the owner, contractors, consultants, suppliers and vendors. Most of these studies consider the owner as one entity. In practice, this assumption is not always correct. Usually, within the owner team, many parties, such as the project manager, project team, operations, project sponsor and finance department, interact and work with other project parties to manage the project. Considering the owner team as a single entity may introduce issues because it dilutes their responsibilities. If all owner team members are lumped under one general category, it might be difficult to know or understand who from the owner team is responsible for each issue. This could explain why some projects fail, regardless of the researchers' efforts to study the subject and suggest solutions. If we cannot identify who is responsible for each specific issue, then we cannot claim to be able to effectively develop solutions to resolve the issues.

Considering the importance and influence of the project sponsor's role in project success, the project sponsor should fully understand his/her roles and responsibilities and the influence of their decisions on projects. Therefore, to help address the project delay issues my organisation is facing, it is necessary to explore the project sponsor's role and demonstrate how his decisions can influence the project's progress.

1.5 The Research Problem

The organisation is embarking on a new era and an ambitious plan to become a pillar of the Saudi Arabian economy. Projects were initiated to enable this new strategy. My organisation, however, is similar to other organisations in Saudi Arabia that are confronted with project delay issues (Assaf and Al-Hejji, 2006; Elawi et al., 2016; Al-kharashi and Skitmore, 2008; Alhoweish, 2011). Management was worried about project delays; if projects are not completed on time, then the organisation cannot achieve their planned objectives on time. Accordingly, management made three strategic decisions: to establish two departments, rather than one, to manage projects, to initiate the development of a project management procedure and to hire new employees with project management experience to improve project delivery. These actions were helpful but not sufficient to help recover from the delay in the projects.

As PMO, we were interested in finding solutions to project delay issues. We knew these were strategic projects for the organisation, and if we failed to complete the projects successfully, our careers would be affected. Therefore, the project teams conducted lessons-learnt workshops to review the previous projects' activities. The purpose was to identify the factors that affected the progress of projects and examine alternative solutions. The lessons-learnt workshops revealed several issues that had influenced the progress of the projects. The issues identified were classified according to the project phase and the party responsible for causing each issue. The common issues that did not belong to a specific phase were listed under a general category. Table 1.1 presents the suggested improvements to the general issues that affected the progress of the projects, including the responsibility for each issue.

Serial no.	Lesson Learned (Suggested Improvement)	Responsible
1	Timely project decision making (Contract Awards, Budget Approvals, Authority Matrix, Project Support Protocol, unrealistic dates, budgets).	Project Sponsor
2	Stakeholders to adopt project's priorities rather than functional position.	Steering Committee
3	Establish corporate-wide (Project Support Procedure) to provide necessary projects support from different organization entities (Finance, Recruitment, HR, IT, GS)	Project Sponsor
4	Lack of agreed & signed "Roles & Responsibilities" matrix between Projects and Operations addressing main interactions, expectations and needed inputs form both parties.	Project Sponsor
5	Secure timely feedback on project queries during execution from Operation and other functions.	PMO/ Operation
6	Full-time physical presence of authorized operation rep. during the project execution phase.	Project Sponsor
7	Secure a long-term/global contracts with manpower supply companies to secure needed project manpower in due course.	PMO/Procurement

Table 1.1: General lessons learnt. (Source: PMO lessons-learnt workshop recommendation.)

I presented the outcomes of the lessons-learnt workshop to the project sponsor and the steering committee members. They agreed with most of the identified issues, but there were doubts about the issues concerning the project sponsor, who could not accept or understand how he had contributed to project delays. All of the above issues presented in Table 1.2 are important and must be addressed to reduce their impact on the progress of the projects. Given the importance of the project sponsor's role, this research will focus on exploring his impact on the success of the projects.

I conducted a literature review to become better informed about the studies exploring the project sponsor role (Merrow, 2011; James et al., 2013; Kemp, 2004). The literature demonstrated that, at times, project sponsors are dysfunctional and, knowingly or unknowingly, behave in ways that bring projects down (Melymuka, 2004). Furthermore, some studies confirm that there are factors, such as organisational culture, project management knowledge and experience and leadership skills, that can influence a project sponsor's performance (Stare, 2011; Plessis and Hoole, 2006; Pereverzev, 2011; James, 2000).

The prime responsibility of the project sponsor is to guide projects to success (Kemp, 2004). Therefore, this research explores the effect of project sponsors' decisions on the success of projects. Section 1.6 details the objective of the study and presents the research questions.

1.6 Objective of the Study and Research Questions

The objective of this study is to promote the organisation's awareness of the importance of the project sponsor's role to the project's success (Merrow, 2011; James et al., 2013). This study investigates the project sponsor's role in identifying the decisions that influenced the success of the projects. The intention was to be able to articulate to the project sponsor the effect of some of his decisions on the project's success. The ultimate goal was to generate awareness and understanding about the effect of some of the project sponsor's decisions on project success and provide new insights so that the research participants and I could influence the project sponsor's decisions.

The following is a list of the research questions agreed upon by the research participants:

- What are the implications of the project sponsor's decisions for the project's success?

It is sometimes challenging for project sponsors, especially if they lack project management knowledge, to visualise or understand the effect of their decisions on projects (Melymuka, 2004; James, 2000). This happens simply because the effects may not be immediate; they may become clear only several months after making the decision(s). Therefore, it is essential that project sponsors understand how their decisions affect projects' success.

- What are the factors that influenced the project sponsor's decisions?

It is common that a project's sponsor wants his/her projects to succeed. In a normal situation, project sponsors will not make decisions if they know that they will affect their project(s). Certain conditions, however, influence the project sponsor's decisions, such as market conditions, customers' needs, management demands or even a personal interest (Pereverzev, 2011; James, 2000; Merrow, 2011). The aim is to identify these factors and analyse their influence on the project sponsor's decisions.

- What are the strategies the research participants and I can use to influence the project sponsor's decisions?

The project team, as represented by the project manager, must work with the project sponsor. The success of the projects depend on several factors. One is the quality of the relationship between the project manager and the project sponsor (Bryde, 2007; Kloppenborg, 2007; Walker, 2012). Both leaders must learn how to work together. The project manager, while managing the day-to-day project activities, should be aware of the strategies available to influence the project sponsor's decisions (James et al., 2013).

The following section explains the rationale for using the action research approach for this study.

1.7 Rationale for Using Action Research as the Core Research Method

Action research is a recent form of personal and organisational development (Peddler, 2008). The action research process provides an opportunity for practitioners to conduct scientific and rigorous research in their organisations. Action research is a participative process whose aim is to take action towards resolving real organisational issues and provide learning from the process (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). The process provides a mechanism to test, validate and assess the actions taken and, if needed, take corrective actions (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). The action research approach consists of four cycles: constructing, planning, taking action and evaluating action. See Figure 1.2 (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010).

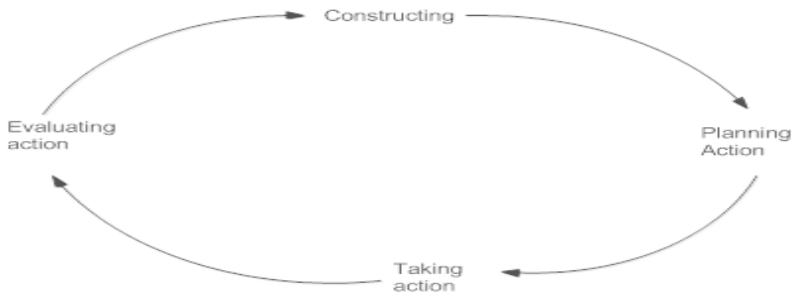

Figure 1.2: Action research cycle. (Source: Coghlan and Brannick, 2010, p. 8.)

Although the action research approach is well known in health and educational studies, the approach has also been used effectively to study topics related to project management (Parker and Mobey, 2004; Hartmann et al., 2008; Chivonne, 2014). My research topic, the effect of the project sponsor's decisions, spans several theories, such as leadership (Yukl and Taber, 2002), project sponsorship (Crawford et al., 2008) and organisational culture (Pereverzev, 2011; Plessis and Hoole, 2006; Smith, 2003). Therefore, I needed a flexible approach, such as action research, to understand all the issues

surrounding the project sponsor's role. Project delays are a concern for both management and the project team. As a scholar-practitioner, it is vital for me to effectively participate and engage with the research participants to explore the effect of the project sponsor's decisions on the project's progress and provide a critical contribution to improvements in the project delay issues.

Researchers can use many approaches to study organisational issues (Creswell, 2007). The action research approach, however, is unique. Its dynamic nature is suitable for studying topics related to project management (Chivonne, 2014). Action research is considered an excellent problem-solving technique that has helped examine project sponsor issues in a participative environment (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010). Using action research, I was able to address the organisational reality, create options, take action and introduce effective change (Takey and de Carvalho, 2015). This approach helped me develop new insights and actionable knowledge that promoted organisational awareness about the effect of the project sponsor's decisions on a project's success.

1.8 Significance of the Study

There is a research gap about the project sponsor's role, in particular how the project sponsor could impact projects' success (O'Brochta, 2010). The literature review helped me to identify the areas that still need to be explored. Appendix B1 summarises the literature contributions related to the project sponsor's role. Scholars and practitioners have explored various aspects related to the project sponsor such as characteristics, attributes, key roles and the importance of the sponsor's role to the project's success (Bryde, 2008; Crawford et al., 2008; Helm and Remington, 2005; Kloppenborg et al., 2014; Walker, 2012). However, they have not sufficiently demonstrated how the project sponsor's decisions could impact projects' success or how organisations should appoint and develop project sponsors. Even researchers like Vicki James, Ron Rosenhead and Peter Taylor, who thoroughly investigated the topic of project sponsorship, merely provided a list of the behaviours that project sponsors should avoid without explaining how each of the behaviours can affect project success (James et al., 2013).

Project sponsors sometimes make decisions or direct the project team to take specific actions that, in their view, will support the project. However, in a real sense, sometimes they actually hinder the project's success (James et al., 2013). Merrow (2011) pointed out that there are mistakes such as setting unrealistic project completion dates or assigning low budgets to projects that may lead to their failure, and that executives make most of these mistakes. These mistakes are typical and occur in numerous organisations. Unfortunately, executives who make these mistakes do not realise the impact of their decisions on the project's success (Melymuka, 2004). They think they are helping projects to succeed, whereas they are actually increasing the projects' failure rate.

My organisation established ambitious objectives and initiated new projects to enable achievement of these objectives. However, all three of the initiated projects encountered a schedule delay. Therefore, if the issues causing the delay—including issues caused by the decisions of the project sponsor were not addressed, the organisation could not achieve the planned objectives on time. The factors that may cause projects to be delayed, such as issues caused by contractors, designers, vendors, project teams, and project managers, have been adequately examined (Assaf and Al-Hejji, 2006; Elawi et al., 2016; Mahamid et al., 2015; Merrow, 2011). However, the impact of the project sponsor has not been adequately covered (Crawford et al., 2008; Helm and Remington, 2005). Therefore, to help address the project delay issues in my organisation and the knowledge gap about the project sponsor's role, it is necessary to explore the project sponsor's role. The objective is to demonstrate how the project sponsor's decisions can influence the project's success, identify the factors that influence the project sponsor, identify the criteria that organisations should use to assign project sponsors, and determine how to develop project sponsors.

1.9 Summary

This chapter highlights the project delay issues in the organisation and their influence on the organisation's ability to achieve its new objectives. Project delays are a major concern not only for the organisation but for the project team as well and will have significant implications for both the organisation and the project team. If project delay issues are not resolved, the project team's ability to achieve the organisational objectives may be affected. Moreover, if the project team fails to complete the project on time, the career progression of the team members could be affected. Merrow (2011) argued that megaprojects are either career creators or career destroyers.

Action research (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010) has been used as a core research method to explore the role of the project sponsor. Several issues and factors have been identified as contributors to project delays. The scope of this research, however, is limited to the exploration of the effect of the project sponsor's decisions on a project's success.

Scholars and practitioners have confirmed the importance of the project sponsor role to a project's success (Melymuka, 2004; Ong et al., 2009). The project sponsor role is critical, as he/she makes strategic decisions that may lead projects to fail. The objective of this research was to promote awareness of the effect of the project sponsor's decisions on a project's success. The research aimed to identify the factors that influenced the project sponsor's decisions. The ultimate purpose is to influence the project sponsor's behaviour and decisions and thereby avoid making decisions that may negatively influence a project's success.

This research is organised in eight chapters. Chapter one introduces the research and is where I provide information about the research background and detail the research problem and objectives. Chapter two presents the results of the critical literature review. The research methodology and the review of the qualitative research approaches and information about the research participants are explained in chapter three. Chapter four presents the action research approach, chapter five presents the findings of the research and chapter six presents the action cycles. In chapter seven, I share the findings of the research and reflect upon it. Chapter eight provides a conclusion and recommendations for future actions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the critical literature relevant to the role of the project sponsor in megaprojects. The literature review is intended to advance my understanding of the various aspects of the project sponsor‘s role and learn about the research approaches previous researchers have used to explore the subject (Boote and Beile, 2005). I used books, handbooks and journals to search for literature concerning the project sponsor‘s role. During the search process, I used keywords like project executive, project leader, project stakeholders and project sponsor.

It was difficult to find complete studies relevant to the project sponsor‘s role in projects. Although I used multiple search terms, I found little literature that explored the project sponsor‘s role. In Saudi Arabia, I could not find any study that addressed the project sponsor‘s role. I performed a comprehensive literature review that covered all aspects of the project sponsor‘s role, including the possible causes of the project sponsor’s behaviours and decisions (James et al., 2013) and the strategies the project team can use to maintain a constructive relationship with the project sponsor (Londono and Swain, 2015).

The work of the researchers who have studied the project sponsor‘s role (Crawford et al., 2008; Bryde, 2008; James et al., 2013; Kloppenborg et al., 2014) has demonstrated the importance of the role to the success of projects. It provides insights into how the project sponsor‘s role is viewed and practised in different organisations. Furthermore, the literature provides information about the unique characteristics and attributes that should exist in any project sponsor to support projects effectively (Walker, 2012).

The reflection on the available literature guided me to focus my inquiries, finalise my research questions and decide on my research approach. As a result, I was able to better understand the relationship between the project sponsor’s performance and the project’s success. The literature also provided substantial information about the strategies available to influence the project sponsor’s decisions (Cohen and Bradford, 1989; Fu et al., 2004).

This chapter structure is as follows: first, it provides a summary of the literature review around the general causes of project delays, both internationally and in Saudi Arabia. It then explores how the project sponsor can influence a project’s success. The possible factors that may influence the project sponsor’s decisions and the importance of the project sponsor‘s role are examined. Furthermore, the chapter explores the strategies that research participants and I can use to influence the project

sponsor's decisions and behaviours. The chapter also demonstrates how the literature informed me while developing a conceptual framework. Finally, I provide a critical reflection on what I learnt from the literature and how it affected the selection of my research approach.

2.2 Causes of Project Delays

Project delays and cost overruns are two issues frequently associated with the execution of megaprojects (Merrow, 2011; Aziz, 2013). Mahamid (2015) has argued that megaproject failure remains a significant concern for organisations. Project delays and associated issues have been given tremendous attention by organisations, universities and researchers examining the delay of projects and their cost overrun issues to recommend mitigations and suggest solutions (Lewis, 2000). Nevertheless, despite all of these efforts by scholars and practitioners, the rate of project failure remains high (Davies, 2002; Merrow, 2011). Collyer (2000) found that 75% of all transformational business projects fail to achieve their objectives. Merrow (2011) argued that around 70% of the 300 megaprojects studied by the Independent Projects Analysis Institute (IPA) were unable to achieve their objectives. Therefore, what factors lead to the high failure rate of megaprojects?

The literature revealed that several factors led projects to be delayed (Kharashi and Skitmore, 2008; Aziz, 2013; Mahamid et al., 2015). Project failure can occur from factors such as the complexity and dynamic nature of the project environment, the maturity of the organisational project management or the organisation's culture (Assaf and Al-Hejji, 2006). Project leadership could also contribute to the success or failure of projects (Ong et al., 2009). Moreover, factors such as uncertainties around the project's timeline, budget, required specifications and stakeholder requirements could contribute to project failure (Atkinson et al., 2006).

Therefore, the factors that cause projects to fail are many. Hence, scholars and practitioners have classified these factors into several categories to facilitate their analysis and the recommendation of solutions (Al-Momani, 2000; Doloi et al., 2011; Hamzah et al., 2011; Yang et al., 2013; Aziz, 2013). They used different criteria to categorise the factors. The first and most commonly used criterion is classification according to the party that caused the delay. For example, Aziz (2013) classified the causes of project delay into nine categories: consultant-related factors, contractor-related factors, design-related factors, equipment-related factors, external factors, labour-related factors, material-related factors, owner-related factors and project-related factors.

Doloi et al. (2011) investigated the causes of project delays in the Indian construction industry. They discovered seven significant factors that caused projects to fail; the factors mostly related to contractors, such as poor site co-ordination, improper planning, a lack of communication, a lack of commitment and insufficient site management. Two factors related to owners: a substandard contract

and a lack of clarity in the project scope. Al-Momani (2000) researched the Jordanian construction industry to identify the factors that led projects to fail. He investigated 130 projects and located six significant factors that contributed to project failures: designers, user changes, weather, site conditions, late deliveries, economic conditions and an increase in quantities.

The second criterion is related to how the factor affects the project's activities and duration. Yang et al. (2013) classified these factors into two main categories: those that extend activity durations and those that lead to a delay in starting the activity. The third relates to the justification of the causes. Hamzah et al. (2011) studied project delays in Malaysian construction projects. They grouped the causes of project delays into two main categories: excusable and non-excusable. The non-excusable causes are those issues caused by contractors, suppliers and vendors. The contractors and suppliers responsible for these delays were not compensated for any additional work. The excusable causes are further divided into two groups: compensable and non-compensable. Both groups relate to the owners and their agents, such as consultants. The compensable factors are acts by owners that cause a delay in projects, such as scope change, slow decision-making, work suspension and the late review or approval of the design documents.

Different criteria, therefore, can be used to categorise the causes of project delays. The researcher should use the optimal criteria to allow the achievement of the research objectives. A substantial number of scholars and practitioners agree, however, that the owners, contractors and consultants are the key parties responsible for most project delays (Al-Momani, 2000; Kharashi and Skitmore, 2008; Aziz, 2013; Mahamid et al., 2015; Assaf and Al-Hejji, 2006). Therefore, it is necessary to study separately all parties that may cause projects to fail in order to understand each party's contribution.

2.3 Causes of Project Delays in Saudi Arabia

Since 1970, scholars and practitioners in Saudi Arabia have studied the causes of project failures (Assaf and Al-Hejji, 2006). In today's environment, completing projects on time is vital for all organisations in Saudi Arabia. All organisations are keen to participate in furthering the Saudi Arabian Vision 2030. Therefore, project failure is a significant concern for both public- and private-sector organisations (Mahamid et al., 2015; Elawi et al., 2016). As a developing country, Saudi Arabia has unique challenges that affect the execution of projects. For example, most engineering work for megaprojects is performed overseas, most equipment is manufactured abroad and most construction labourers are not Saudi nationals and lack the required skills. These challenges increase the complexity of managing megaprojects in Saudi Arabia.

Scholars and practitioners who have studied the causes of project failure in Saudi Arabia have classified the causes of the delays according to the party who caused the delay. They identified

categories like owner, contractor, consultant, government and weather as the typical ones that cause project delays (Al-Ghafly, 1995; Assaf and Al-Hejji, 2006; Al-kharashi and Skitmore, 2008; Alhoweish, 2011; Mahamid et al., 2015). If we compare the project failure causes internationally against those in Saudi Arabia, we find many similarities. The main difference is that, in Saudi Arabia, most researchers have classified the causes of project delay into categories according to the project entity that caused the delay, while in other countries, the researchers, in addition to the responsible party criteria, used other classification criteria, such as the justification for the delay (Hamzah et al., 2011) and the effect on the duration of activity (Yang et al., 2013).

Classification of the factors that affect project success is influenced by several factors, such as the research objectives, the nature of the data collected and the location where the survey takes place. Although there is disagreement among scholars and practitioners about how to classify the causes of project delay, classification according to the responsible party was the most commonly used strategy (Al-Ghafly, 1995; Assaf and Al-Hejji, 2006; Al-kharashi and Skitmore, 2008; Alhoweish, 2011; Mahamid et al., 2015). Thus, researchers are always interested in identifying who is responsible for the failure. Knowing the party responsible for causing the failure enables organisations to identify the root causes of the issue and provide specific solutions for them.

Therefore, while investigating the three projects as the cases for this study, the issues causing the delays were classified according to the project phase in which they occurred. It was also essential to sort the problems according to their responsible party. The objective of identifying the responsible party highlights how much each party contributed to the project's failure. The next section of this review will assess the literature concerning the contribution of the project sponsor to the failure of the project.

2.4 Contribution of the Project Sponsor to Project Failure

Scholars and practitioners have confirmed the importance of the project sponsor's role in project success (Crawford et al., 2008; Bryde, 2008; James et al., 2013; Kloppenborg et al., 2014). The project sponsor is a key stakeholder who is responsible for the project's success (Kemp, 2004). He or she plays a vital role in supporting the project manager to manage the project effectively. The project sponsor is a senior executive with authority higher than that of the project manager (PMI, 2013). Therefore, his/her decisions will significantly affect the project's performance.

Organisations assign project sponsors to strategic and essential projects to increase the project's success rates. Sometimes, however, project sponsors embrace behaviours or make decisions that affect the project's success (Melymuka, 2004; Merrow, 2011). Delaying decisions, setting unrealistic project durations, assigning low project budgets, getting too involved in the project's day-to-day

activities and directing vendors to reduce their bid prices unrealistically are all examples of decisions and actions that some project sponsors make without considering their effect on project performance (Lewis, 2000; Merrow, 2011; James et al., 2013). In the project I was managing, I experienced some of the project sponsor's decisions that delayed the progress of the project. For example, the project sponsor did not endorse the project team's recommendation to place the order for one of the plant's pieces of long-lead equipment. Instead he requested that the team return to the supplier and request a 25% discount on the price. This request was unreasonable, but because it was made at the direction of the project sponsor, the team went back to the supplier to request the price discount. The supplier refused to provide a discount, however, claiming that he had already offered the best price. In the end, we could not get a discount, but the project lost 2–3 months to the negotiation with the supplier. This is a clear example of how the project sponsor's decision directly affected the project's progress.

In my organisation, the management team assigned a project sponsor to oversee the three projects. It was not clear, however, why the management, while appointing the project sponsor, did not provide clear information about his exact role and responsibilities. It was left to the project sponsor to decide how he wanted to undertake the role. This situation created confusion and ambiguity about who was responsible for critical project decisions, such as selecting contractors and awarding contracts (PMI, 2013).

Project sponsors may have other issues that can contribute to the failure of projects. Examples include having unrealistic expectations of what can be done, trying to play the role of the project manager, a lack of availability and accessibility, a refusal to share power and authority with the project manager, an unclear or ambiguous line of roles and responsibilities and a focus on the 'how' instead of the 'what' (Walker, 2012). Merrow (2011) argued that megaprojects fail because of seven significant mistakes: greed, an unrealistic schedule, no front-end loading, a delay working out the details, requesting an unrealistic discount, shifting the risk to contractors and firing project managers. Most of these mistakes are made by executives. There is sufficient evidence in the literature to affirm that project sponsors sometimes contribute to project failure, but, with the exception of Merrow (2011), Melymuka (2004) and O'Brochta (2010), other researchers who have studied the project sponsor's role have not articulated how a project sponsor can influence project success.

2.5 The Project Sponsor

Briner, Geddes and Hastings first used the term 'project sponsor' in 1990 (James et al., 2013). Project management bodies consider the project sponsor as a critical stakeholder who has significant influence on a project's success (Kloppenborg et al., 2009). Many scholars and institutions, such as the Project Management Institute (PMI), the Association for Project Management (APM) and the Office

of Government Commerce (OGC) in the United Kingdom, all define the project sponsor (Crawford et al., 2008). The Project Management Institute (2013, p. 32) defines the project sponsor as 'the person or group who provides resources and support for the project and is accountable for enabling success'. Many researchers argue that this definition is incomplete because it is now understood that project sponsors provide more than mere resources to projects. Other functions that project sponsors offer today include developing the project charter, selecting the project manager, ensuring assignment of the resources necessary for the project's success (Kloppenborg et al., 2014) and maintaining overall financial control (Helm and Remington, 2005; Lechler and Cohen, 2009). Therefore, the project sponsor can be a senior executive who provides guidance and leadership to the project manager and his/her team. He/she oversees the project's progress, provides the required support for the project, controls and governs the project budget and has the ultimate responsibility for the project's success (Kloppenborg et al., 2014; Crawford et al., 2008). The project sponsor role is influenced by organisational and external factors, such as marketing deadlines or governmental regulations (Smith, 2003; Plessis and Hoole, 2006).

The next section reviews the key roles and responsibilities of the project sponsor in each project phase.

2.5.1 The Project Sponsor's Key Roles and Responsibilities

Policies, procedures and guidelines are established to organise work, standardise the management of the business and help minimise peoples' mistakes (Kemp, 2004). Organisations assign project sponsors to perform specific roles. Clear expectations of the assignment of the project's sponsors are crucial to their success (James et al., 2013). The project sponsor should know and understand why he/she has been assigned to the project and what he/she is expected to deliver. This knowledge helps the sponsor focus on the required deliverables. Management can easily measure and evaluate his/her performance. Project sponsors usually have limited time to support projects, as they also have other organisational responsibilities to manage (Englund and Bucero, 2006). Thus, the project sponsor needs to find the best way to support projects.

Kloppenborg et al. (2014) conducted five research studies to determine the key roles the project sponsor should play in each project phase. Four studies focused on studying the four project phases (initiation, planning, execution and closeout), and the fifth study covered the overall project life cycle. Figure 2.1 illustrates the five project life cycle phases, as defined by the PMI (2013).

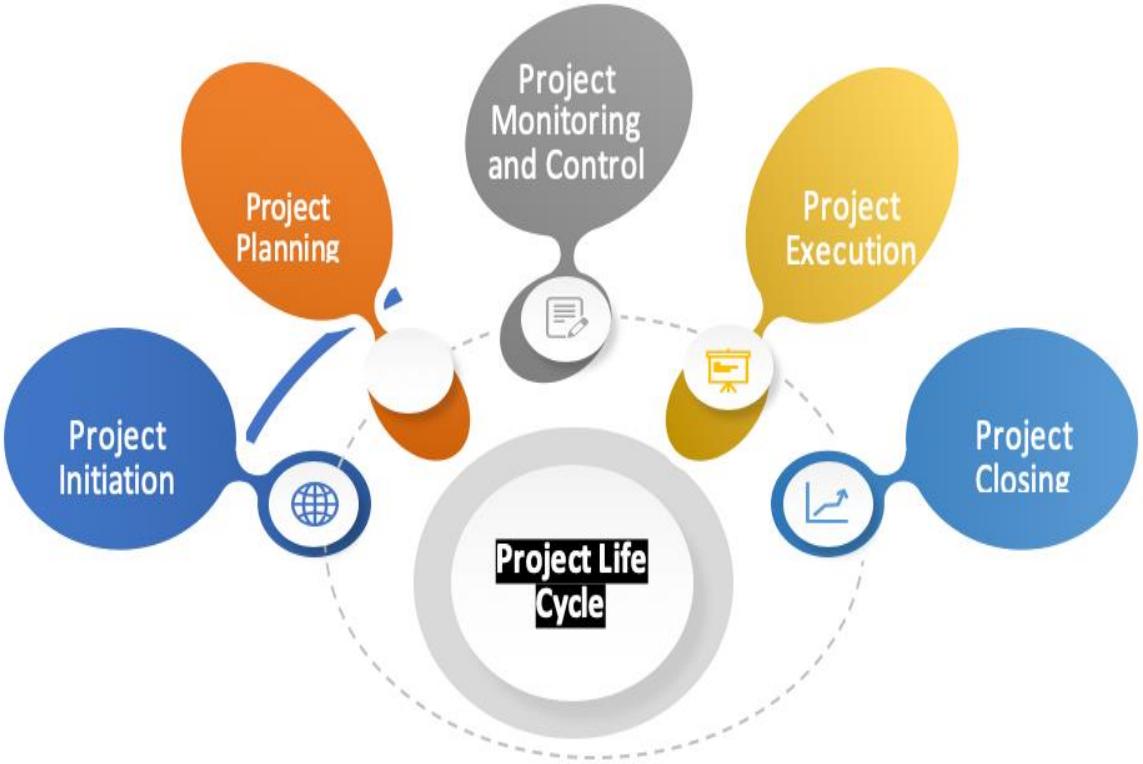

Figure 2.1: Project life cycle phases. (Source: PMI, 2013.)

2.5.2 Key Roles of the Project Sponsor in Each Project Phase

In reviewing the role of the project sponsor in each of the project phases, I relied on the work of Kloppenborg et al. (2006, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2014) because other researchers, such as Merrow (2011), Crawford et.al. (2008) and James et al. (2013), did not detail the role of the project sponsor in each project phase. The first phase of any project is initiation (PMI, 2013). The project initiation phase starts with the idea of the project and lasts until the project charter is issued or the business case is approved (Kloppenborg et al., 2009). Ideally, the business development function within the organisation leads the initiation phase (PMI, 2013). In megaprojects, to calculate the economic parameters, such as the Internal Rate of Return (IRR), Return on Investment (ROI) and Net Present Value (NPV), significant activities, such as basic engineering, initial cost estimate and high-level scheduling, should be completed. Hence, the initiation phase is essential to determining the viability of the project. In my organisation, if the initiation phase has been completed, this means that the project is feasible, the economics have met the organisation's standard and the project has been formally approved to move to the next phase. The essential activities the project sponsor must emphasise during the initiation phase are selecting and monitoring the project manager, defining expectations, obtaining agreement

on business case goals and objectives from stakeholders and establishing performance measures (Kloppenborg et al., 2009).

The next project phase is planning (PMI, 2013). Kloppenborg et al. (2011) conducted another study, this time to identify and validate the key roles the project sponsor should play during the planning phase of the project, which starts after signing the project charter and ends with approval of the project plans, a full commitment to implementing the project and the project kick-off. The planning phase is where the project's overall strategies are determined (PMI, 2013). The critical activities that the project sponsor should undertake during the planning phase are to ensure that the stakeholders' relationships are planned and to appoint a project manager (Kloppenborg et al., 2011).

The planning phase is followed by the execution phase, where implementation occurs. The execution phase starts after the official approval of the project, including the project budget, and ends with the successful commissioning and start-up of the constructed facility. The project execution is the most extensive project phase; it is where most of the project budget is spent (PMI, 2013). It includes significant project activities, such as engineering, procurement and construction. In this phase, the actual work is performed. The project team must work with many parties, including stakeholders, external parties, contractors, vendors and suppliers. Most project issues occur during the execution phase. In this phase, the project sponsor must focus on building strong stakeholder relationships, guaranteeing quality and ensuring effective communication (Kloppenborg et al., 2014).

The project closing is the last phase of the project's life cycle (PMI, 2013). When the project is closed, it means that all work has been completed, the facility has been successfully commissioned, all payments have been made and all project-committed funds have been cleared. In the closing phase, the business will start realising the benefits of the project. Similarly to the other project phases, Kloppenborg et al. (2012) indicated that the project sponsor must undertake critical roles in the project closing. They believed that the project sponsor should practise the functions of knowledge management to ensure that the lessons learnt from the project are captured, demonstrate the benefits of the project to the organisation and provide successful termination.

2.6 Factors Influencing the Project Sponsor's Performance

To fully understand the project sponsors' behaviours and why sponsors sometimes make decisions that curtail the success of the projects, I needed first to understand the factors that influence the project sponsor's decisions and actions. This knowledge would help me select the appropriate strategy to influence the project sponsor's decisions and behaviour. The literature revealed factors that affect the project sponsor's decisions, such as the organisational culture and politics (Smith, 2003; Plessis

and Hoole, 2006; Pereverzev, 2011; Stare, 2011) and a lack of project management knowledge and experience (Merrow, 2011; James et al., 2013). The next sections discuss these factors in more detail.

2.6.1 Influence of the Organisational Culture

Organisational culture is important because it guides the behaviour of the organisation's employees and vital for an organisation because it provides it with an identity (Deal and Kennedy, 1983; Peters and Waterman, 1982 cited in Smircich, 1983) and enhances the stability of the social system (Louis, 1980; Kreps, 1981 cited in Smircich, 1983). Pereverzev (2011) has argued that organisational culture is a potential barrier to project success. Projects need a supportive corporate culture to increase their success rate (Plessis and Hoole, 2006; Stare, 2011). Projects require a culture that appreciates time, knows how to engage and communicate with others, plan and organise the work and has a sense of urgency (Lewis, 2000). Promoting a project management culture require strengths in three areas: management of project portfolios, management of individual projects and control of the organisational environment (Duncan, 2000).

Denison et al. (2003) developed a framework model to understand the relationship between the organisational culture and the effectiveness of the organisation. The model has four attributes: mission, consistency, adaptability and involvement. Each attribute has three dimensions. The model demonstrates how the behaviours of executive management can influence an organisation's performance. Organisations can measure their performance against the model's twelve dimensions: empowerment, team orientation, capability, core values, agreement, co-ordination and integration, creating change, customer focus and organisational learning.

2.6.2 Project Management Knowledge

Project management is the systematic application of science and knowledge to the management of projects. The primary essence of project management is to plan, schedule and control the project activities to achieve the overall project objectives (Lewis, 2000). Project management bodies, such as Project Management Institutes (PMI) and Independent Project Analysis (IPA), have developed guidelines to help organisations effectively manage their projects. Universities have established special programmes to teach and promote project management knowledge and practices. Organisations have realised the importance of employing the best project management practices to boost projects' performance (Verzuh, 1999). Some develop project management policies and procedures, enrol project teams in specialised project management training and use advanced project management tools and techniques to improve the project's success rate. Organisations, however, continue to suffer from high rates of project failure.

Scholars and practitioners attribute this high failure rate to many factors. Among them is the lack of implementation of project management practices (Carvalho et al., 2015). The lack of project management experience and knowledge is one of the project sponsor's issues (Merrow, 2011). The following section discusses some project management practices whose influence, if failed to be understood by the project sponsor, will significantly affect project success (James, 2000; Merrow, 2011).

2.6.2.1 The Contracting Strategy

The project contracting strategy is the method selected to execute the project. It defines how the organisation plans to manage various project activities and the relationship between the owner and the contractor (Merrow, 2011). Many strategies can be used to manage the execution of megaprojects. Gloria et al. (2011) have argued that the following are common project contracting strategies: design-build, unit price, time and material, cost reimbursable, lump sum turnkey and engineering procurement and construction (EPC).

Selecting the right contracting strategy helps optimise the project's cost and duration (Al-Tabtabai, 2002). Each strategy has advantages and disadvantages (Verzuh, 1999). Organisations should not use one strategy for all projects. The project team should select the best strategy to facilitate attaining the project's particular objectives (Merrow, 2011). The selection of the project strategy depends on many factors, such as the criticality and urgency of the project; the availability of resources; the governing regulations and policies; the availability of vendors, consultants and contractors; and the organisation's experience with the selected strategy (Merrow, 2011; Supraptoet al., 2016). To choose the best strategy for a given project, the key project players should evaluate different strategies in light of the project's unique requirements (Al-Tabtabai, 2002).

Deciding which strategy to use is not a straightforward process. Several criteria can influence the choice of strategy. Al-Tabtabai (2002) developed a contracting selection system based on the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) to help organisations select the best strategy for their projects. Failure to account for all criteria whilst choosing a strategy will introduce risk to the project. In the case of megaprojects, the overall high-level project strategy is formulated immediately after issuing the project charter. The project strategy is then detailed during the basic engineering phase. In Saudi Arabia, the lump-sum turnkey and cost-reimbursable execution strategies are most commonly used for megaprojects.

Hammed (2006) has argued that innovative procurement strategies, such as novation, could reduce the project schedule's duration by 4–5 months. Equipment novation means that the owner will

purchase the long-lead equipment before completing the detailed engineering, then, once the EPC contract is awarded, novate or transfer the equipment purchase order to the EPC contractor.

Both strategies—the owner's placing the request or using the novation strategy—have advantages and disadvantages. The most significant benefit of both strategies is the optimisation of project schedules. The disadvantages, however, relate to the potential claims and disputes between the owner and contractor in the event of a delay or failure to meet the project specifications. In the novation strategy, the drawbacks relate to the additional cost the owner may incur as a result of transferring the risk to the contractor.

In sum, several strategies can be used to execute projects. There is no single best strategy for all projects (Thompson et al., 1998). It is not necessary to use the same strategy for all projects, as each project will have unique requirements (Merrow, 2011).

2.6.2.2 Cost Estimation

The project schedule, cost and quality are the most critical parameters that organisations use to measure the success of projects (Merrow, 2011; Carvalho et al., 2015). Some scholars, however, such as Kloppenborg (2007), have argued that, in addition to the schedule, cost and quality, organisations should also consider additional criteria, such as customer satisfaction and achievement of the desired project objectives, when measuring a project's success. The accuracy of the cost estimate is vital, as the calculation of the project economics depends on it.

Specialised project management bodies, such as the PMI (2013), provide several methods that professionals can use to prepare a sound project cost estimate. The accuracy of the cost estimate depends heavily on the availability of information, the scope definition and the competence of the individuals preparing it. Gloria et al. (2011) has affirmed that the project estimate should be carried out using a bottom-up approach after completing the basic design and availability of the required information to develop a firm cost estimate.

Often, at the start of the project, a rough cost estimate is developed. Then, as the project progresses and more information becomes available, a more accurate cost estimate can be prepared. For full project funds, some organisations mandate that the project team submit a precise project cost estimate in the range +/- 10%. The organisation then calculates the project economics and makes the final investment decision.

Another method that organisations use to develop project cost estimates is by benchmarking against previous projects. Professional estimators endeavouring to establish sound estimates using the benchmarking approach should carry out the estimation, and the organisation should have a database

of past projects that is updated regularly to reflect changes in materials, labour, escalations and inflation (Verzuh, 1999). Kemp (2004) warns organisations that quick estimation techniques, such as benchmarking to past projects, using a simple to-do list and creating a fast work breakdown structure, have flaws. He recognised that, at times, organisations require the project to be completed at specific dates and not to exceed a certain amount of budget. He recommended not using the specified date and budget approach while planning the project estimate. Instead, the project should put these requirements aside and develop the project plan and cost estimate using best practices, then compare the results against the imposed dates and budget. If there is a gap, the project manager should try to bridge it. If the gap cannot be bridged, then the project sponsor should recommend cancelling the project.

Despite the availability of many methods for developing cost estimates, organisations often fail to create an accurate estimate. Some organisations do not follow any of these methods. For example, for Project A, the project sponsor benchmarked the developed cost estimate to previous projects of a similar size completed by the organisation ten years prior. What motivated the organisation not to follow the best cost estimation practices is not entirely understood. Brown (2011), however, has argued that the project cost estimate is a political decision. Organisations sometimes lower the cost estimate to secure project approval (Brown, 2011; Lichtenberg, 2016). Therefore, if organisations are keen to develop accurate cost estimates, the best path is to follow best cost estimation practices.

2.6.2.3 Determination of a Project's Duration

Modern project management pays attention to a project's planning and scheduling processes (PMI, 2013). Good project planning and scheduling helps the project team manage the project activities and avoid surprises and ensures the project's safety and quality (Lewis, 1994; Verzuh, 1999). The project end date or completion date is the final result of preparing a good project schedule.

The PMI (2013) has suggested two techniques for creating project schedules: forward scheduling and backward scheduling. In forward scheduling, the project team lists the project activities, identifies the relationships among the activities, assigns a duration to each activity and then computes the project duration. In the backward scheduling phase, the process is reversed. The total project duration will be determined first, then worked backward to calculate the duration of the activities. Either scheduling approach can be used, provided that the project team considers all project activities, assigns a reasonable duration to each activity and clearly explains the assumptions used to prepare the schedule (Lewis, 2000). Today, most planners use scheduling software like Primavera or MS Project to calculate a project's duration and identify the critical path.

In all of the project cases in this study, the project teams used the backward schedule. The management decided the project end date, and the project teams then worked out the detailed activities schedule. The backward approach is an acceptable method. The issues the project team faced, however, related to setting unrealistic project durations before gathering enough information about the scope of the project.

The failure to complete projects according to their planned project schedules is a common issue in industrial projects (Assaf and Al-Hejji, 2006; Merrow, 2011; Mahamid et al., 2015; Elawi et al., 2016). Poor planning is a crucial cause of project failures (Lewis, 2000; Kempt, 2004: Merrow, 2011). Several factors affect project planning and scheduling, including incomplete scope, failure to account for project risks, false assumptions and the competence of the staff preparing the schedule (Verzuh, 1999; Lewis, 2000).

The project plan is a roadmap that guides the project's execution. Organisations are eager to meet the project duration because project delays affect the organisation's ability to achieve its objectives. Additionally, when projects are delayed, the project will likely incur additional costs, and the quality may be negatively affected; this may introduce claims or disputes with contractors (Johansen et al., 2016). Therefore, it is to the project's parties' advantage to ensure the development of a sound plan to facilitate the project execution.

Similarly to the cost estimation process, organisations may determine when each project should be completed. Most of the time, the market drives the project schedule or end date, and marketing teams identify the project end date without consulting the project's staff (Merrow, 2011). Ignorance, a lack of project management experience and politics all lead executives to determine unrealistic project completion dates (Homer, 2008). Unfortunately, executives who decide upon unrealistic project schedules are not aware of how their decisions affect the project's success. Having executives set project durations is a political decision that puts their personal interests over those of the project (Homer, 2008).

2.7 Influence Strategies

People manage projects (Merrow, 2011). Therefore, among the critical success factors for any project is project leadership, which includes the project manager and the project sponsor or executive. Hence, these two leaders must work together to support the project team and facilitate the project activities.

James et al. (2013) provided suggestions and recommendations to both project managers and project sponsors on how to work together to foster a positive project culture in which projects could succeed. Their book details tactics and actions that project managers can use to work with different types of project sponsors. Walker (2012) believes that the relationship between the project sponsor and

project manager should be based on partnership principles. While the project sponsor advises the project manager about the organisational culture, policies and procedures and how to manage stakeholders, the project manager should educate the project sponsor about the project's management practices, tools and techniques.

To increase the rate of project success, the partnership between the project sponsor and project manager should continue throughout the entire project life cycle. This relationship should be complementary rather than one in which one party is subordinate to a superior manager. The project manager must fully understand the power dynamic and the organisational politics. Knowing who holds power in the organisation and how decisions are made can help the project manager gain support for the project.

Furthermore, Londono and Swain (2015) have suggested some strategies that the project manager can use to better engage with the project sponsor. The project manager should maintain mutual respect, earn the project sponsor's confidence, be honest by putting the facts on the table and be flexible and willing to adjust his or her leadership style to better engage with the project sponsor. Figure 2.2 summarises these strategies.

Figure 2.2: Strategies the project manager can use to work with the project sponsor. (Source: Londono and Swain, 2015.)

To foster a healthy working environment, the project manager's strategies (Figure 2.2) and the project sponsor's strategies (Figure 2.3) should not be in competition. The two leaders should employ appropriate strategies to work together to enhance their relationship and promote mutual trust. The project sponsor needs to foster a favourable environment for the project team to function. He or she

can employ several strategies to motivate the project manager and the project team. For example, at the start of the project, the project sponsor can create a joint project culture in which the entire project team share the same values and understand how the project will be managed (Whitten, 1999). The sponsor must explain the processes of communication, escalation, planning and control and project review to the project team. The project sponsor must have a positive influence on the project manager and project team (James et al., 2013).

The project sponsor can use his or her position of power to influence others (Fu et al., 2004). The project sponsor can also, however, use other effective influencing strategies: for example, persuasive or relationship-based strategies (Fu et al., 2004). It is better if the project sponsor convinces the project manager of his or her view using logic and common sense rather than forcing his or her perspective. If the project manager feels assured, then he or she will own the idea and strive to support it.

The project sponsor can use social relationships, make a personal appeal (through favours) or provide exchanges (offering additional benefits) to influence the project manager (Fu et al., 2004). Other influencing strategies the project sponsor can use include altruism. Sosik et al. (2009) have argued that altruism positively influences a project manager's behaviour. By altruism, they mean sacrificing for others or helping others without expecting something in return. When the project manager believes that the project sponsor is humble, ethical and strives to support him or her and his or her team in performing their duties, he/she will be motivated and demonstrate loyalty.

Another strategy the project sponsor can use is the reciprocal strategy (Cohen and Bradford, 1989) to influence the project manager (influence without authority). This strategy assumes that people will not act unless they know that they will get some benefit in return. If the project manager wants an employee to listen, he/she must be ready to provide some benefit to the employee. On the other hand, Raelin (2003) has argued that the reciprocal strategy is unethical and that people should act without expecting anything in return. Wood and Gray (1991) have also rejected the reciprocal strategy. To influence others, they suggest that people should collaborate. In collaboration, a group of people work together in an interactive process to decide on an issue or resolve a problem (Wood and Gray, 1991).

The project sponsor has several strategies, as summarised in Figure 2.3, for influencing the project manager's performance. The project sponsor may need to try different approaches to determine the best strategy to promote a positive influence.

Figure 2.3: Strategies the project sponsor can use to influence the project manager. (Source: Fu et al., 2004: Sosik et al., 2009; Cohen and Bradford, 1989.)

In my organisation, the project sponsor and project director had divergent views about the management of many project activities. Their different organisational cultures and backgrounds impeded their ability to understand each other. Unfortunately, sometimes these differences escalated into conflict. This indicated that both leaders had failed to employ the right strategy to get to know each other and co-operate (Walker, 2012). Sadly, this turbulent relationship created an unpleasant environment for the entire project team.

Melymuka (2004) suggested some strategies for the project sponsor and project manager to delineate their relationship. These suggestions are primarily directed at the sponsor's manager and the project manager. Melymuka (2004) encouraged the sponsor's manager right from the start to appoint the right sponsor to the right project. She also argued that it would be better if the expectations and the measure of success were agreed upon and documented in writing. On the other hand, if the project manager decides to complain to the sponsor's manager about the project sponsor's performance, the author suggested that the project manager express the facts, not their feelings, with supporting evidence whenever possible. The project manager should not recommend replacing the sponsor; the decision about the appropriate course of action should be left up to the sponsor's manager.

2.8 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the project sponsor's role extends across many concepts that aid in understanding its essence and the ability of the project manager to influence the project sponsor's

decisions. The existing research in the area of project management (Mir and Pinnington, 2014; Carvalho et al., 2015), organisational culture (Hunt, 2000; Denison et al., 2003) and change management (Kotter, 1996) represents critical concepts and theories in exploring the factors that influence the project sponsor's decisions.

The project sponsor is a vital stakeholder who has significant influence on the project's success (Verzuh, 1999). Therefore, it is essential to examine the characteristics of the role and understand how the project sponsor can contribute to a project's failure (Merrow, 2011). The objective of this study is to introduce a positive change to influence the project sponsor's behaviour and decisions. To achieve this objective, it is first essential to understand the concept of project sponsorship. Then it is necessary to understand the underlying factors that affect the project sponsor's behaviour and decisions. Finally, an optimal influencing strategy should be selected to plan and implement effective change (Kotter, 1996).

Crawford et al. (2008) developed the situational project sponsorship model, a conceptual model for understanding the concept of project sponsorship. The model defines the project sponsor's role as that of governance or support. Organisations assign project sponsors to either control or govern the project team's activities or to provide support to the project team.

The situational sponsorship model provides a framework to help organisations assign the right project sponsor to each project. The authors did not, however explain the extent to which the project sponsor should engage in the management of projects. Does he/she need to be involved in the project's details, claiming that he/she is either supporting or governing the project, or does he/she need to focus on specific tasks?

Another concept I found useful for explaining the roles and responsibilities within projects is the concept of a project sponsor's key roles, as developed by Kloppenborg et al. (2014). The intent is to encourage the project sponsor focus only on key roles at each project phase, leaving the project manager to manage the project's day-to-day activities.

The concept of the project sponsor's key roles will help project sponsors manage their time, considering their busy schedules. The project sponsor is an executive who has other duties in the organisation; therefore, the project's day-to-day activities should be left to the project manager to manage (Merrow, 2011). The key roles the project sponsor should play in each project phase are detailed in section 2.5.2.

The situational sponsorship model and the concept of the project key roles assume that the project sponsor will always behave in ways or make decisions that help projects to succeed. This assumption is not always accurate, however, because, knowingly or unknowingly, some projects' sponsors'

behaviour or decisions lead projects to fail (Melymuka, 2004). The literature revealed that project sponsor behaviour and performance can be influenced by factors like the sponsor's knowledge of and experience with project management (PMI, 2014), organisational culture and politics (Smith, 2003; Plessis and Hoole, 2006; Pereverzev, 2011; Stare, 2011) and the lack of understanding of his or her role (James et al., 2013). To understand how these factors influence the project sponsor's decisions and behaviour, I examined the theories and concepts related to the influence of the project management and organisational culture on project success.

Project management is a broad subject, and, like management, there is no single theory to explain it (Koskela and Howell, 2002; Morris, 2004; Garel, 2013). Within the project-management field, however, are individual subjects that can be explored theoretically, such as theories for planning, execution and control (Koskela and Howell, 2002). Nevertheless, some scholars believe that it is possible to develop one theory to explain project management as whole. For instance, Hanisch and Wald (2011) developed a theoretical model to help understand the concept of project management. Their model depicts a relationship among the independent variables, such as culture, leadership and project organisation; the moderating variables, such as complexity, risk management and uncertainty; and the dependent variables, such as a project's success or failure, team performance and value of the project management. This model still needs to be empirically tested, however.

Despite the debate among scholars and practitioners over whether a project management theory exists, there is growing evidence in the literature to suggest that the application of modern project management tools and techniques will influence project performance (Mir and Pinnington, 2014). Badewi (2016) developed a model to examine the relationship between project management practices and benefits management. He found that the application of project management practices had a significant effect on the success of the projects. Carvalho et al. (2015) developed a conceptual model to investigate the effect of project management on a project's success. The model examines the relationship between the project management enablers, such as the project processes, roles, Project Management (PM) web portal, PM assessment, benchmark and implementation status, PM training and development and the nine PM knowledge areas (PMI, 2013) and the project's cost, schedule and margins. The model confirms that the PM variables, such as awareness of PM knowledge areas, organisational environment and the level of PM training and development in the organisation, will affect the project's schedule. Carvalho et al.'s (2015) model was used as a framework to identify the project management practices that the project sponsor failed to implement and the cultural traits that affected his performance. This model was selected because it maintains a relationship among the application of the project management practices, organisational culture and project success.

Another factor that the literature indicated influences the project sponsor's decisions is the organisational culture (Smith, 2003; Plessis and Hoole, 2006; Pereverzev, 2011; Stare, 2011). A culture is a set of shared beliefs, assumptions and behaviours that are common or shared within the organisation (Hofstede, 1993). Over time, each organisation develops its own working method or culture that distinguishes it from other organisations (Hunt, 2000). How the organisation deals with and manages its business will influence its overall performance. Culture is a social phenomenon that is sometimes very difficult to measure. Some scholars, however, have developed a mechanism by which organisations can measure the effectiveness of their organisational culture compared to that of others. Denison et al. (2003) developed a framework model to understand the link between an organisation's culture and its effectiveness. The model provides insight into how the cultural profile of the steering committee and the support departments affects projects' success.

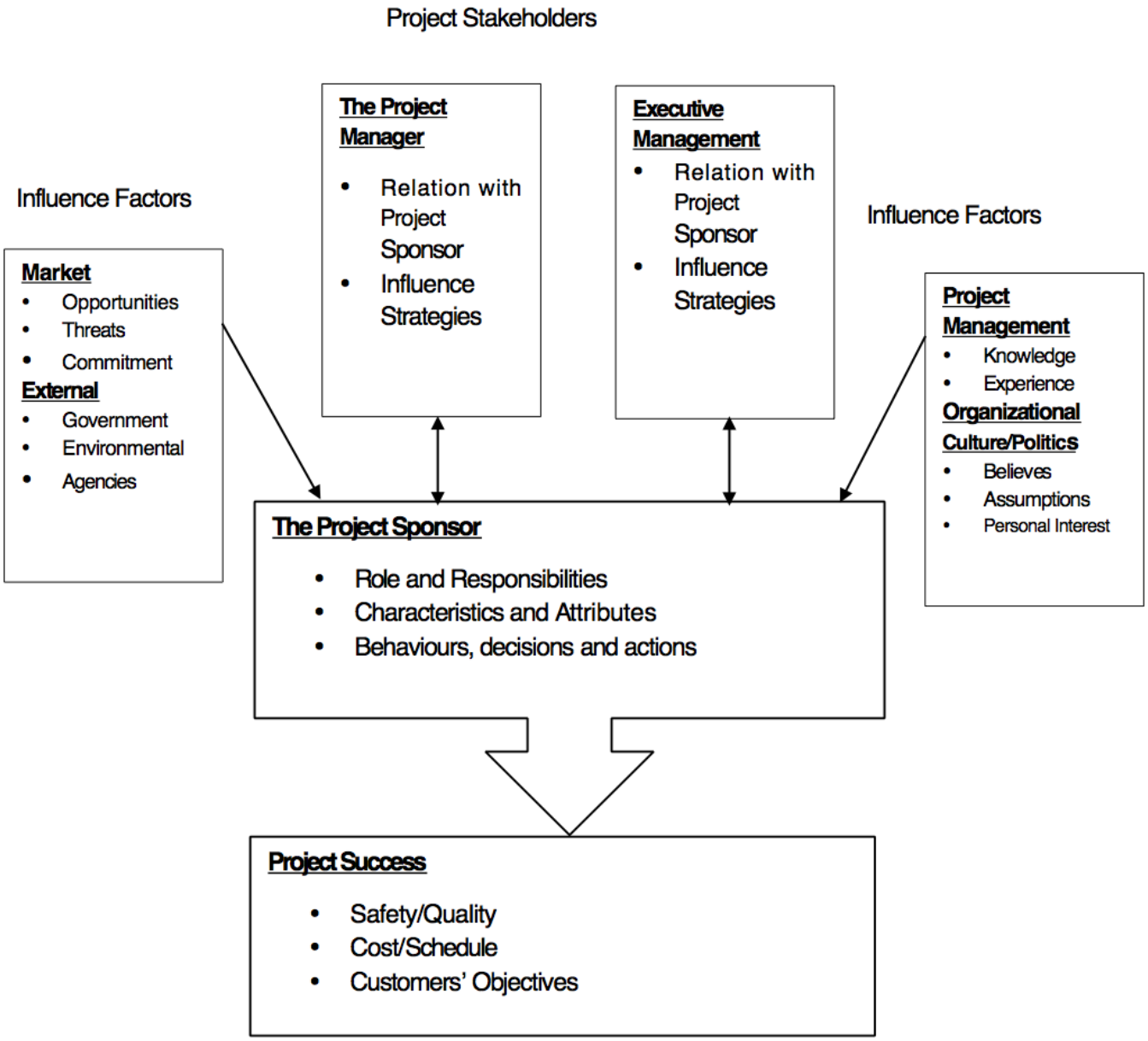

Figure 2.4: Conceptual framework to understand the effect of the project sponsor's decisions.

The literature review led to the development of a conceptual framework through which to understand the project sponsor's role and effect on the success of a project. The framework, as illustrated in Figure 2.4, depicts the relationship between the key project stakeholders (management and the project manager) and the project sponsor, as well as the strategies they can use to influence the project sponsor's behaviour and actions. The framework also identified the factors that may influence the project sponsor's decisions and behaviours, such as the organisational culture and politics, the lack of project management and the requirements of marketing, government and agencies.

2.9 Critical Reflection and Implications for Research

The project delay issues that my organisation faced are not unique. Many organisations in Saudi Arabia suffered and continue to suffer from the consequences of project delay issues (Assaf and Al-Hejji, 2006; Al-kharashi and Skitmore, 2008). For decades, scholars and practitioners have explored the factors that cause project delays. They recommended solutions and suggested mechanisms to overcome the delay issues (Al-Momani, 2000; Doloi et al., 2011; Hamzah et al., 2011; Aziz, 2013; Yang et al., 2013). After all this effort by the researchers and institutions, however, the failure rate for projects remains high (Collyer, 2000; Merrow, 2011).

This research intends to explore the effect of the project sponsor's behaviour and decisions on a project's success. The project sponsor, as a critical stakeholder, has significant influence on the success of projects (PMI, 2013). Evidence from the literature indicates the importance of the project sponsor not only at the start of the project but throughout the project's life cycle (Crawford et al., 2008). To emphasise the importance of the project sponsor's role, Kloppenborg et al. (2014) identified key roles the project sponsor should play in each project phase. Still, project sponsors should not focus their engagement solely on the key roles (Kemp, 2004). The project sponsor should always be available to support the project when needed. Crawford et al. (2008) have argued that the specific project situation should determine the need for a project sponsor's intervention. They developed the situational sponsorship model to help project sponsors understand their role within projects.

This model provided useful insights to better understand the project sponsor's role and his/her relationship with the other stakeholders, but it could not explain how the project sponsor can affect a project's success. If we want to develop good project sponsors, then it is not enough for them merely to understand their roles and responsibilities; rather, it is essential that they know that they can also contribute to project failures (James et al., 2013). Therefore, project sponsors must know and realise the effect of their behaviours and decisions on a project's success (Merrow, 2011).

Kemp (2004) argues that the primary objective of the project sponsor's assignment is to provide support to the project manager and project team on issues beyond the control of the project team. The literature provides insight into the project sponsor's role, the essential skills and attributes they should possess and the strategies the project team can use to help influence their behaviour and decisions (Helm and Remington, 2005; Kloppenborg et al., 2014; Fu et al., 2004; Sosik et al., 2009; Walker, 2012). Little information, however, has been provided about the behaviour and actions that project sponsors should avoid. The literature does not fully demonstrate how the project sponsor's decisions can affect the success of projects. Even researchers like James et al. (2013), who have thoroughly explored project sponsorship, have merely provided a list of the behaviours that project

sponsors should avoid without explaining how each can affect a project's success. In addition, there is little information in the literature about the development of project sponsors. For example, who is responsible for developing project sponsors, how should their skills be developed and what are the skills and competencies they need for the role?

The results of the literature review had implications for finalising my research questions and objectives, selecting my research methodology and selecting the research participants.

2.10 Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the factors that cause projects to fail, both internationally and in Saudi Arabia (Al-Momani, 2000; Doloi et al., 2011; Hamzah et al., 2011; Yang et al., 2013; Aziz, 2013). There were significant similarities between the factors internationally and those in Saudi Arabia, but Saudi Arabian projects are more prone to project delay issues than those in other parts of the world because most of their construction labourers are not nationals and lack the skills required. In addition, most project equipment and materials are imported, so the project team must perform extensive co-ordination to ensure the timely delivery of the equipment.

Scholars and practitioners affirm that a project sponsor can contribute to project failures (Crawford et al., 2008; Kloppenborg et al., 2014). Only a few researchers, however, have explained how the project sponsor contributes to a project's failure (Merrow, 2011; Melymuka, 2004; O'Brochta, 2010). The scant literature that is available provides insight into possible factors that can influence the project sponsor's decisions and briefly describes how a project sponsor can influence the success of a project, as well as the strategies the project team can use to influence his or her decisions.

The literature identifies key issues related to the project sponsor's performance, such as setting unrealistic project durations, not understanding his/her role and responsibility in the project, delaying decisions, assigning low project budgets, getting too involved in the project's day-to-day activities; directing bidders to unrealistically reduce their bids and making decisions without considering their effect on project performance (Lewis, 2000; Merrow, 2011; James et al., 2013). The literature reveals that the key factors influencing the project sponsor's decisions are the organisational culture, the lack of knowledge about the basic practices of project management and the desire to achieve one's own personal interests (Carvalho et al., 2015).

To summarise, the available literature adequately covers the factors that lead to project delays, but there is little written about how project sponsors affect the success of a project, nor about how teams can develop project sponsors to promote their support of projects. In Saudi Arabia, I could find no research on the role of the project sponsor. Therefore, there is a need to conduct more research to explore various aspects of the project sponsor's role.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the research methodology used to conduct this study. It begins by reviewing the research paradigms and methodologies, then provides an overview of the action research approach and how it was used in this study to explore the project sponsor's role in the context of the three projects. Finally, the chapter describes the research inquiry methods used, including those for data collection and data analysis.

Social science research can be conducted using multiple paradigms (Creswell, 2007). Positivist, interpretive, radical-humanist and radical-structuralist paradigms are some examples (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Burrell and Morgan's four paradigms are philosophies used by researchers to address social science and organisational research problems (Hassard, 1991). Each one of these paradigms allows the researcher to examine the research problem from a different perspective (Hassard, 1991). I explored the different philosophical paradigms to identify the relevant theoretical framework and research methodology to guide my research. The intention was to select a methodology that could give me a deeper, better understanding of the project sponsor's role and effect on project success.

Traditionally, positivism has been the dominant paradigm used for scientific research, particularly in fields like chemistry and physics (Singh, 2010). Recently, however, an alternate approach has emerged: the interpretive paradigm. Interpretivism is about understanding people's behaviour in the social world, concerning the internal and external environments (Thorpe and Holt, 2008). The choice of the paradigm affects how the research is conducted, including data collection, analysis and research outcomes (Hassard, 1991). Interpretive researchers use qualitative methodologies, such as case studies, grounded theory, ethnography, action research and phenomenology (Goulding, 1998, cited in Singh, 2010). By contrast, positivist research has an inclination towards quantitative methodologies.

To better understand how and why people behave in a particular way, it is important to engage with them or explore the perceptions of people working with them (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, in this research, I used an interpretive paradigm that adopted a qualitative methodology and an action research approach to explore the effect of the project sponsor's role on project success in the context of the three projects. I did not use the positivist paradigm because the aspects that apply to the project sponsor's role have been under-studied; there is little literature on it (Crawford et al., 2008). Therefore, I needed a paradigm and a methodology that would help me understand and uncover

various aspects of the role. The interpretive paradigm allowed me to understand my workplace problem from the viewpoint of a participant in action and work with the research participants in an interactive process to influence the project sponsor's behaviours and actions (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). The action research approach helped me understand the project sponsor's role and obtain the participants' perceptions about the performance of the project sponsor.

3.2 Research Paradigms

Researchers have sets of beliefs and assumptions, or paradigms that shape how they conduct their research. The research paradigm will affect the researcher's engagement when undertaking social science research. The paradigm has four components: epistemology, ontology, axiology and methodology (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). These components comprise the assumptions, beliefs and values of each paradigm. I examined different paradigms to identify the relevant framework and methodology to guide my research. I reviewed the relativism and pragmatism paradigms. Relativism means that truth is relative to the individual. Relativists do not make claims of absolute truth; instead, relativism assigns equal validity to all claims (Johnson and Duberley, 2000). The relativist is positioned between positivism and social constructionism, accepting the use of multiple sources of data and perspectives, and this enables generalisation. The weakness of this paradigm is that it requires a large sample, which may be costly. It also may be hard to address cultural and institutional differences or reconcile discrepant sources of data (Easterby-Smith et al, 2008).

Pragmatism was developed by philosophers who argue that neither the positivist nor interpretivist paradigm alone can access the truth about the real world (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). They argue that, to study the phenomena at hand, we need a practical approach that allows for a combination of methods to understand the participants' experiences. Therefore, pragmatism prioritises practical considerations over theoretical considerations. It reflects practical inquiry or experience (Shields, 1998) and answers questions like: Who holds the best argument that fits the currently available evidence? Pragmatics assume that the practical world is the only world we can know and that, if the natural reality cannot be found by practical inquiry, then it is not part of the truth. Pragmatics are more concerned about the results than about the system that yields them (Creswell, 2007). For pragmatists, truth is what the investigators agree upon after completing their investigation. Pragmatism usually uses multiple quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection, which may require more time and money to research.

I examined Burrell and Morgan's (1979) four paradigms because they are widely used by researchers to guide their studies (Hassard, 1991). Burrell and Morgan's (1979) work offers different ways of seeing a problem and helps the researcher select the paradigm best suited to achieving the research

objectives. The next section examines the characteristics of the four paradigms in an attempt to explain the rationale for selecting the interpretative paradigm as a framework for this study.

The first paradigm is positivism, which has the ontological assumption that reality exists independently of those who observe it, and an epistemological view, which assumes that the scientific method is the best mechanism to uncover the process of physical and human events (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Positivism confirms that knowledge is based only on sense, observation of the empirical world, experience and positive verification (Jonson and Duberley, 2000). According to Thorpe and Holt (2008), positivism assumes that the only source of knowledge is sensible data. For the positivist, knowledge consists of identifying facts about how and why individuals act as they do and makes connections between facts to produce theories that explain their behaviour. The positivist assumes that theory comes first and collects data to test the theory (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Therefore, researchers who use the positivist paradigm use quantitative methods while conducting research.

The drawbacks of positivism relate to its inflexibility and artificiality; it cannot address meanings well and is not helpful in generating theories or helping management infer what future changes should be made or actions taken (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). I did not use this paradigm for my study because positivism would not provide the opportunity to understand and interpret the project sponsor's behaviours and actions. Positivism would not help me understand the participants' perceptions of the project sponsor's performance or actions or how they affected the progress of the three projects.

The second paradigm is radical structuralism. Researchers using this paradigm want to make a radical change and free people from the status quo (Johnson and Duberley, 2000). Radical structuralism believes that society is organised in a way that makes the unequal power arrangement more likely to continue. They see this inequity as primarily being solved by the objective reality in our social structure. They want to change laws, political policies and economic policies (Hassard, 1991). In this research, it is not my intention to change any policies or procedures at my organisation. Therefore, this paradigm is not suitable for understanding the project sponsor's role or promoting awareness of the impact of the project sponsor's behaviours and actions.

The third paradigm is radical humanism. Researchers using this paradigm have a subjective view of reality (Johnson and Duberley, 2000). They believe that influential players in society dominate our thinking: in other words, we take our preferred beliefs and values from the dominant class. This type of thinking keeps people in a subordinate position in society. Radical humanists prefer radical change. They want to release people from the dominant way of thinking about the world. Although I wanted to introduce a positive change to influence the project sponsor's behaviour and actions, this paradigm

is not the best for helping me engage with research participants or understand and articulate how the project sponsor's actions could affect the success of the projects.

The fourth paradigm is social constructionism. Researchers using the social constructionist paradigm make an ontological assumption about reality; they believe that reality is socially constructed and is given meaning by people who observe it (Easterby Smith et al, 2008). Their epistemological stance is that knowledge cannot be captured by a single interpretation, but that other observers also have their own interpretations for making sense of people's actions and behaviours and understanding the relationship among variables. Therefore, researchers with these assumptions use an interpretive paradigm and qualitative methodologies to conduct research (Goulding, 1998 cited in Singh, 2010).

Social researchers use the interpretivist paradigm because it enables them to understand reality (Creswell, 2007). The analysis of the phenomena or reality is mostly subjective. For example, two researchers could have different interpretations of the same situation (Shah and Corley, 2006). The strength of the social interpretive paradigm lies in its ability to explain how the change process occurs over time, to understand people's meanings and contribute to the creation of new theories (Hassard, 1991). The data gathering is more natural than artificial. Its weaknesses are related to the time and resources that data collection may require. The analysis of data is more difficult; it is hard to control the pace of progress, and sometimes management find it less credible because it is based on subjective opinions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).

The review enriched my understanding of the characteristics of each paradigm and how researchers use them to address their research objectives. I realised that I needed to select a paradigm that could help address the research questions. Therefore, for this study, I used the interpretive paradigm to explore the project sponsor's effect on the success of projects.

3.3 Available Research Methodologies

Researchers use two primary methodologies to conduct scientific research: qualitative and quantitative (Creswell, 2007). Since no methodology grants privileged access to truth, researchers can also use a mixed methodology in a given study (Johnson and Duberley, 2000). The choice of research methodology is affected by several factors, such as the philosophical paradigm (Burrell and Morgan, 1979), the objective of the research and the researcher's familiarity with the approach. Quantitative methodology is consistent with the positivist paradigm, while qualitative methodology is consistent with the social constructionist paradigm (Goulding, 1998 cited in Singh, 2010). Qualitative research is the process of understanding realities through understanding the context of the problem or issue and the relationships and interactions among people and objects (Creswell, 2007). It helps researchers interpret and better understand people's behaviours and actions. The beauty of qualitative research

lies in its ability to enable researchers to deeply analyse and examine phenomena and discover new variables and relationships (Shah and Corley, 2006).

Scholars and practitioners use different methodologies when studying project sponsorship. The analysis of the literature relevant to the project sponsor's role revealed that, when there is a need to understand a phenomenon, researchers use an interpretive paradigm and qualitative methodology (Helm and Remington, 2005; Crawford et al., 2008; Hall et al., 2003). For example, Helm and Remington (2005) used a qualitative methodology to investigate the project sponsor's role in projects. They used the interpretive paradigm and qualitative methodology because they wanted to understand the behaviours and practices of the project sponsor through the people who frequently interact with them, such as project managers and project directors.

Similarly, Crawford et al. (2008) examined the role of the project sponsor in the organisational context by including the views of the experienced project managers, project team and other project stakeholders. They used the interpretive paradigm and qualitative methodology to gain a rich understanding of the environment in which the role of sponsorship is realised. Hall et al. (2003) used the interpretive paradigm and qualitative methodology to create a better understanding of the perception of benchmarking and performance measurement from the perspective of project sponsors.

On the other hand, quantitative methodology uses data and statistics to infer relationships among the research variables and determine the extent of a phenomenon (Zikmund, 2003). In most cases, the results of quantitative research can be generalised. For example, Kloppenborg et al. (2014) conducted four research studies to identify the critical roles and behaviours of a project sponsor in each project phase. The research identified the lack of clear roles and responsibilities of the project sponsor as one of the factors influencing the sponsor's performance. Knowledge about the key project sponsor's role helps him or her focus on the activities essential to supporting a project.

When the situation becomes complex, researchers use multiple paradigms or mix quantitative and qualitative methodologies to uncover complexity (Kloppenborg et al., 2006; Kloppenborg et al., 2009; Merrow, 2011). They first use qualitative methodology to understand the problem and identify common themes. They then use quantitative methodology to validate and test their findings (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Using multiple paradigms and methodologies to explore a topic is healthy because it allows researchers to view the world from different angles and helps them uncover different aspects of their research. Singh (2010) has argued that using multiple paradigms to research a topic enhances the quality of the research and enriches the knowledge-creation process.

The literature review informed me that researchers have used different paradigms and methodologies to explore the project sponsor's role. There is, however, a slight preference for qualitative and multiple methodologies over the quantitative methodology paradigm. This preference may be attributed to the scarcity of literature exploring the project sponsor's role (Crawford et al., 2008). Thus, researchers prefer to use a qualitative methodology first to explore the role and better understand the phenomena and then conduct quantitative research to test and validate their findings.

Within qualitative methodology, researchers can use several approaches to conduct qualitative research, such as narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, case study and action research (Creswell, 2007; Coghlan and Brannick, 2010).. The next section explains the rationale for choosing the research methodology.

3.4 Choice of Research Methodology

As a key stakeholder, the project sponsor interacts with parties like the project stakeholders and project team members (Kemp, 2004). Thus, the people who frequently interact with the project sponsor are in the best position to observe, interpret and attach meaning to his or her behaviours and actions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Whitehead (2012) seconded this notion; he stated that, to conduct excellent social science research, the researcher must learn the perceptions of the people or the group associated with the study.

Considering the objectives of my research and the dearth of literature exploring the project sponsor's role, and after reviewing the relevant research about the project sponsor's role, I realised that the positivist approach might not be the best choice because it would not help me gain in-depth understanding about the issues surrounding the project sponsor's role (Crawford et al., 2008). The literature informed me of researchers who used the interpretive paradigm when their research objective was to understand the project sponsor phenomenon (Helm and Remington, 2005; Crawford et al., 2008; Hall et al., 2003), while researchers who wanted to define the project sponsor's key roles and identify the project sponsor's attributes and characteristics used the positivist paradigm (Kloppenborg et al., 2014).

Therefore, I adopted the interpretive paradigm, qualitative case study methodology and action research approach to explore how the project sponsor's decisions affected projects (Singh, 2010; Zainal, 2007). The qualitative case study methodology was selected because the research objective was to investigate the project sponsor's behaviours and decisions within the context of the three projects (Dooley, 2002). The qualitative case study methodology allowed me to understand how different variables influenced the project sponsor's decisions and interactions with the project team

and allowed me to explore strategies for influencing the project sponsor's behaviours and decisions (Yin, 1995; Zainal, 2007).

Examination of the project management literature, in particular studies that used case study research, revealed that researchers have used various research methods to address their research objectives (Benn and Dunphy, 2009; Dymond et al., 2006; Hartmann et al., 2008; Meyer, 2000; Parker and Mobey, 2004). For example, Tellis (1997) used a case study approach using interviews to assess aspects of the rapid introduction of information technology at an institution, while Whitehead (2005) employed document analysis to compare action research and project management. Crawford et al. (2008) used a case study using interviews to address the formal and informal aspects of the project sponsor's role. On the other hand, some researchers used case study and action research approaches to introduce change in an organisation (Fuller et al., 2010; Johnson et al., 2014; Pino et al., 2013; Takey and Carvalho, 2015). Table 3.1 presents a summary of the project management literature that used case study and action research approaches. More information about how researchers used case study research methods can be found in appendix B2.

I learnt from the literature that researchers whose aim is to conduct research to bridge a knowledge gap generally use research methods such as documentation, records or interviews, while researchers whose aim is to both conduct scientific research and introduce change typically use an action research approach. In this research, I assessed various case study research methods, such as case study using documentary analysis, archival records or interviews, with an aim to select an appropriate method to address the research objective. I evaluated these methods according to their suitability to help me take actions and influence the project sponsor's decisions. The results of the analysis indicated that using documentary analysis, interviews, archival records or observation alone would not allow me to take actions to influence the project sponsor's decisions. Therefore, I found that the case study and action research approach would be the appropriate approach to address the research objectives. My intent as an inside action researcher was not only to conduct research but to introduce change and influence the project sponsor's decisions (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010; Coughlan and Coghlan, 2002; Crowe et al., 2011; Sullivan et al., 2005). The action research approach allowed me to engage and collaborate with the research participants to take actions to influence the project sponsor's decisions and mitigate some of the organisation's project delay issues.

Authors	Research Objectives	Research Methods
Takey and Carvalho (2015)	Develop a seven-step method for the project management competency map.	Documentation, behavioural event interviews, self-assessment surveys
Johnson et al. (2014)	Understand good energy management practices in shipping companies to increase energy efficiency.	Interviews, focus group.
Pino et al. (2013)	Use action research to manage and develop software engineering distributed research projects.	Controlled experiments, surveys and interviews.
Fuller et al. (2010)	Develop a new approach to capture project-based learning.	Questionnaire-based survey.
Azhar et al. (2010)	Improve access to information to support planning and decision-making in a construction owner organisation through designing and implementing a data warehouse.	Questionnaire survey, focus group.
Hartmann et al. (2008)	Develop and implement information systems to support architecture, engineering and construction (AEC) projects.	Observation.
Azhar (2007)	Study and implement an executive information system (EIS) in a construction owner organisation.	Survey, focus group.
Parker and Mobey (2004)	Identify the risk of introducing an electronic document management system and building a framework to understand risks associated with IT projects.	Interview.
Davison and Vogel (2000)	Use a group support system (GSS) to support a process improvement project in a Hong Kong accounting firm.	Observations, documentation.

Table 3.1. Summary of Project Management Studies that used Case Study and Action Research

3.5 Data Collection Approach

This section describes the methods used in this study to collect and analyse the data. Before discussing the methods of data collection, I provide information about the internal and external research participants. This is followed by a discussion of the data-collection phase, including the interview protocol. Finally, I share details about the data-analysis approach used to identify the significant project sponsor decisions that affected the success of the projects.

3.5.1 Internal Research Participants

There are no strict rules for determining the sample size in qualitative research. Researchers use different methodologies in qualitative studies to determine the sample size. Palinkas et al. (2015) suggest that qualitative research sampling should continue until no new information is acquired. To determine the sample size in qualitative research, some researchers use the term 'saturation', which occurs when the researcher reaches the point where additional sampling will yield little or no additional new information (Gentles et al., 2015).

Researchers using action research to study project management topics, such as Connelly (2010), Parker and Mobey (2004), Takey and Carvalho (2015) and Chivonne (2014), all used a sample size in the range of 3–17 participants. Connelly (2010) argued that to conduct a phenomenology study the sample size is often small and purposeful; even a sample of seven could be sufficient.

Serial no.	Title	Experience	Degree	Qualifications
1	Project Director1	25 years	BS Electrical Engineering, MBA	
2	Project Director2	21 years	BS Mechanical Engineering, Master of Engineering	PMP
3	Project Manager	12 years	BS Electrical Engineering	
4	Project Manager	10 years	BS Mechanical Engineering, MBA	
5	Construction and Interface Manager	19 years	BS Electrical Engineering, MBA	
6	Planning and Control Manager	15 years	BS Engineering	CCE, AVS, PMP
7	Engineering Manager	20 years	BS Electrical Engineering	

Table 3.2. The internal research participants.

In line with researchers who used action research to study project management topics (Parker and Mobey 2004; Chivonne, 2014), I used seven experienced internal participants, as detailed in Table 3.2, as the primary research participants. Those seven participants represent almost all the PMO members. All are males and hold engineering degrees; some also hold Project Management certifications. They have extensive project management experience, hold managerial positions in the organisation and are heavily involved in supporting the three projects that are the cases for this study. Figure 3.1 illustrates the organisation of the project department, including the positions of the internal participants and their relationship to the project sponsor.

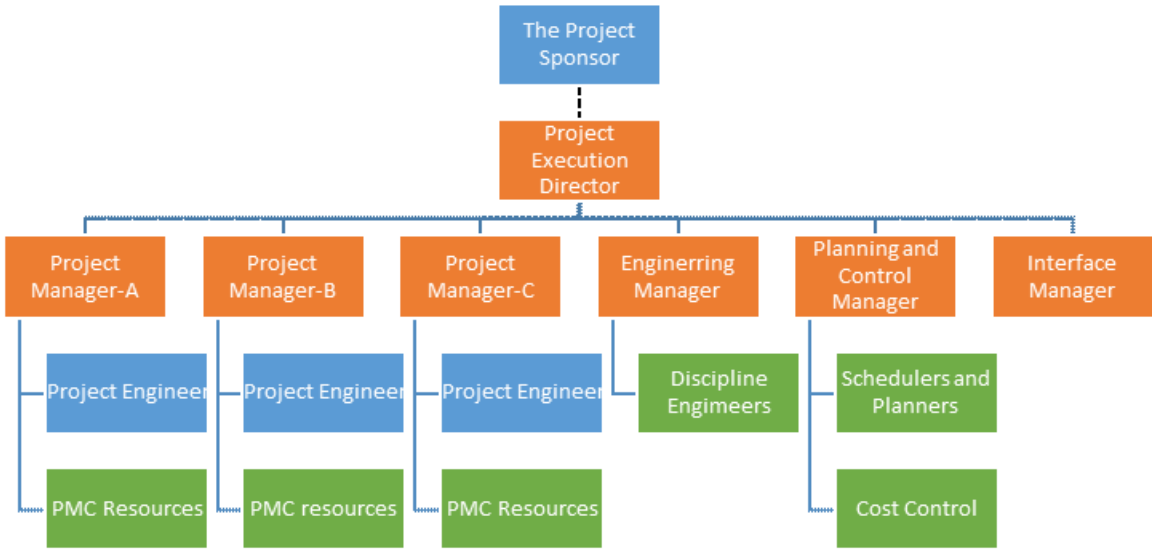

Figure 3.1: Organisation of the Project Execution Department. (Source: project records.)

I could not invite more participants to the study, as none of the remaining team members possessed the requisite managerial experience or project management competencies. The sample included two project directors, two project managers, the engineering manager, the planning and control manager and the construction manager. All are knowledgeable, all are experienced and all indicated an interest in supporting the research (Gentles et al., 2015; Nastasi, 1998).

3.5.2 External Research Participants

In action research studies, it is preferred that the research participants be employees of the organisation that is the subject of the study. Some researchers, however, prefer to engage external participants as well (Turner, 2010; Chivonne, 2014). Turner (2010) has claimed that many researchers choose to engage external research committees to provide constructive feedback to the researcher. Engaging external resources in action research is aligned with the action research process. Chivonne (2014) used external resources to ensure the quality and validity of his action research project.

Similarly, Takey and Carvalho (2015) used a panel of experts to understand the reason for tailoring project management competencies to a specific organisation. In this study, I engaged external participants to explore the project sponsor's role. Considering the limited literature exploring the project sponsor's role (Kloppenborg et al., 2007; Crawford et al., 2008), the involvement of external participants provided a rich source of information to aid in understanding how the role is undertaken in different organisations. In addition, the inclusion of external participants mitigated the effect of the relatively small internal participant sample size.

I decided to engage external participants to help address the organisational politics. I used them as an expert panel to share their experience handling similar situations in their organisations. The expert panel also helped identify the internal biases and provide a more objective view of the issues and concerns. From my experience with the management and knowledge of the organisational culture, management rarely listens to the project team's suggestions. By contrast, if industrial experts endorse the recommendations or consultants make a suggestion, management will likely listen to them. The external participants provided insights that directed my attention to areas the research team had not before considered.

The external participants lent the study more credibility and alleviated the research bias. One could argue that the research was otherwise biased, as all other research participants belonged to the project team and there was no engagement of participants from other departments. Another possible bias was that all research participants were new to the organisation and might not provide an objective view of the projects' events. The involvement of the expert panel helped reduce the effect of these biases, as the panel was diversified and provided an independent and objective view.

The expert panel consisted of six project management experts selected from my professional researcher network. Initially, 20 invitations were sent to professionals to join the study. The response rate was low, so invitations were sent to five more professionals. In total, 25 professionals were invited to join the panel; 17 did not respond to the invitation, and only eight accepted the invitation. Two did not respond when I sought to schedule an interview time, reducing the participants to six. I then conducted interviews with these six experts. Figure 3.2 provides an overview of the process used to select the external participants.

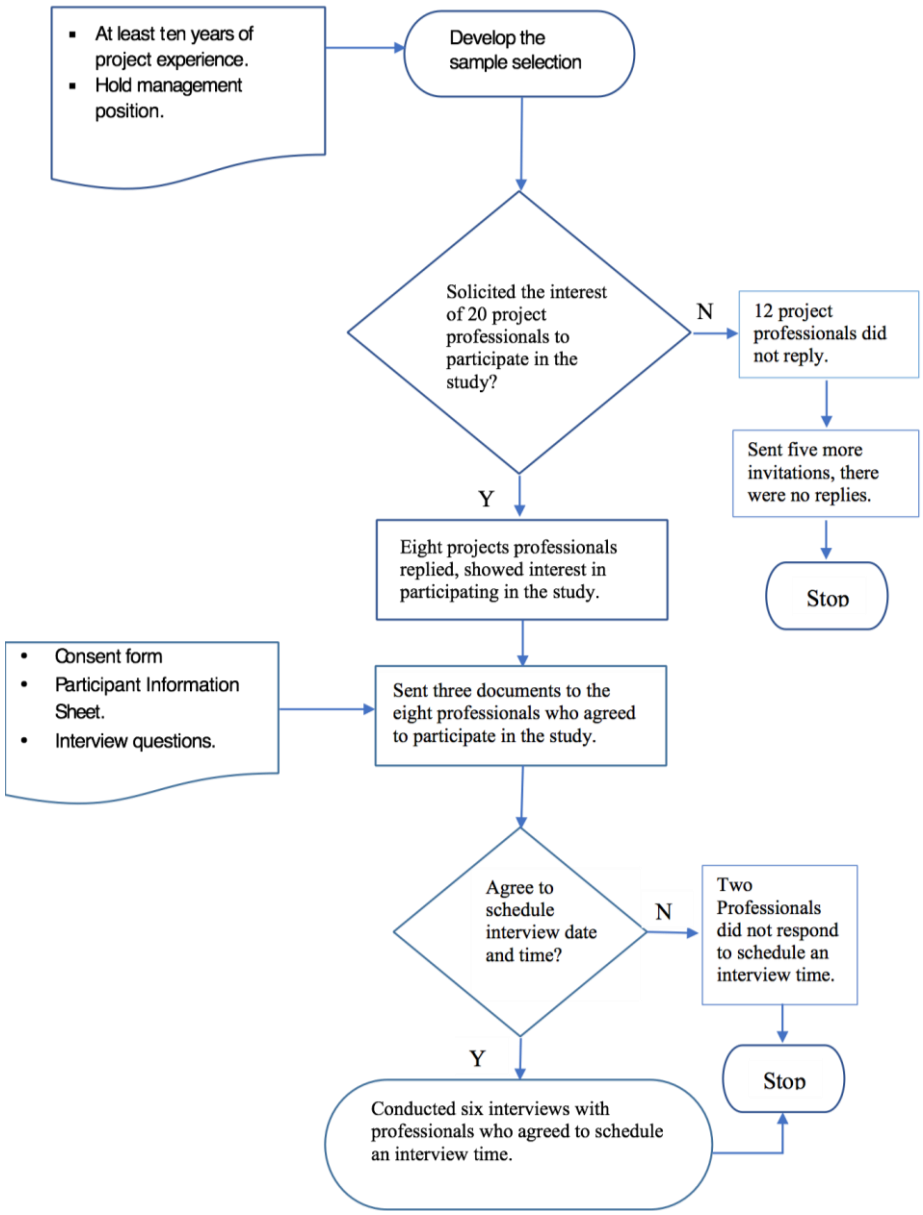

Figure 3.2: P*rocess of selecting the external research participants.*

The members of the expert panel were selected because of their vast experience in project management (at least 19 years), availability and willingness to participate in the study. All are males, hold engineering degrees and are leaders at their organisations. The panel included members belonging to owners, consultants, and contractors organisations. Table 3.3 provides more details of the qualifications and experience of the expert panel members.

Serial no.	Title	Experience	Degree	Qualifications
1	Managing Director of an international project consultancy firm	40 Years	PhD	
2	Executive Vice President - Petrochemicals	30 Years	MBA	
3	General Manager, Strategic Business Development	24 Years	BS in Engineering	PMP
4	General Manager for a Project Management Consultant	30 Years	BS- Engineering	
5	Project Manager	24 Years	BS- Engineering	
6	Head of Project Management and After Sales Services	19 Years	BS-Engineering	

Table 3.3: Details of the expert panel. (Source: professional network.)

In total, there were 13 participants in this study: seven internal and six external. The sample was relatively small but was deemed suitable, as this is a specialised study and only those who met the sample selection criteria were invited to participate. In addition, participation was affected by the fact that most project sponsors are busy and difficult to engage in studies (Helm and Remington, 2005; Crawford et al., 2008). Therefore, the sample size of 13 participants seems reasonable, as other researchers who studied the project sponsor's role used similar sample sizes. For example, Chivonne (2014) used a sample size of six project managers to explore how project managers acquire and exchange knowledge. Parker and Mobey (2004) used a sample of 17 participants to conduct action research using the phenomenology approach to explore the perceptions of risk management in an electronic management system project in a UK company. Similarly, Hall et al. (2003), in their study to understand the importance of the project sponsor's role, interviewed 12 project sponsors.

3.5.3 Data Collection and Analysis

There are several options available to researchers for use in collecting data in qualitative studies. Four popular forms of data collection apply to qualitative research, namely interview, observation, document and audio-visual (Creswell, 2007). I focused on these four forms of data collection because they enabled me to collect the data required for the research. Using these forms, I was able to understand what influenced the project sponsor's decisions and how the project sponsor's behaviours and actions affected the success of the projects. All four data collection forms are suitable for helping explore the project sponsor's role but in this study, I only used three: interview, observation and document (Hall et al., 2003; Chivonne, 2014).

Researchers studying project sponsorship have used multiple forms of data collection (Parker and Mobey, 2004; Crawford et al., 2008). Turner (2010) argued that, in qualitative studies, interviews are

often coupled with other data collection sources to enable the researcher to gather the information needed for the study. Using multiple forms of data collection in a study enables researchers to collect more data and validate the data collected (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Hartmann et al. (2008), in their action research project, aimed to design an information system to suit specific project cultures used three data collection sources: interviews, observations and archived documents. Chivonne (2014) used two data sources, observations and interviews, in his action research project to understand how project managers acquire and exchange knowledge.

Therefore, it is common in action research for researchers to use more than one data collection method to gather the required project data. The choice of the appropriate form of data collection is governed by factors like cost, time, access, ethics and researcher knowledge and skills (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). In action research, the data collection is generated through interventions, engagement and taking actions (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010). For that reason, I used journaling to document all observations and interventions (Creswell, 2007). In addition, as an insider action researcher, I had authorisation from the project director to conduct the study and access to some project documents and records, such as the minutes of meetings, project records, contracts and presentations. The interview, however, was the primary form of data collection I used in this study (Creswell, 2007; Qu and Dumay, 2011). I used these three sources of data-gathering to help collect, authenticate and validate the data. The next section discusses the interview process.

3.5.4 The Interview Process

There are numerous ways to conduct interviews, including structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2007). Interviews can be conducted face-to-face, via telephone, audiotape, online or in groups. The selection of interview type depends on various factors, such as the location of the interview, the availability of participants, cost and time. Researchers conducting action research have used different types of interviews. Parker and Mobey (2004) used both a focus group and individual semi-structured interviews in their action research study on risk management in electronic management system projects.

Similarly, Takey and Carvalho (2015) used semi-structured interviews, focus groups and document analysis to solicit participants' views about the project management competency map. Chivonne (2014) used interviews, focus groups and observation to collect data from six project managers to explore how project managers acquire and exchange knowledge. Accordingly, in this study, I used interviews, observation and documents to collect the research data.

I developed the interview protocol to solicit the participants' perspectives on and insights into issues surrounding the three projects. I used a semi-structured interview approach to guide and provide

flexibility to participants in expressing their views (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Qu and Dumay, 2011). I used the general interview guide as described by McNamara (2009), as I wanted the participants to answer the same questions and have the flexibility to ask clarifying questions during the interview. I used open-ended questions to allow the participants to express their perspectives freely (McNamara, 2009).

I emphasised to the participants the need to support their claims with facts whenever possible or to guide me to where I could find documents confirming their claims. As discussed in the conceptual framework, section 2.8, I was interested in identifying the factors that influenced the project sponsor's behaviours and decisions and understanding how the identified factors affected the project sponsor's decisions. In addition, I wanted to understand how the research participants and I could influence the project sponsor's decisions and promote his knowledge about project management practices.

I limited the interviews to a maximum of five key questions (Creswell, 2007). I carefully selected the wording of the questions to ensure participants' understanding. I avoided asking questions that focused only on the effect of the project sponsor's role. Instead, general questions were asked to encourage the participants to list all the issues that contributed to the delay of the projects.

The actual interview process began after obtaining the consent of the participants. Initially, I solicited the research participants' interest in being involved in the study by sending them individual emails. After receiving their confirmation, I sent them the research consent forms for signature, the participant information sheets (PIS) and the interview questions. A copy of the participants' consent, PIS and interview questions can be found in Appendix A.

I then scheduled a specific interview date and time with each participant. The questions were sent to each participant at least two weeks before the scheduled date of their interview. I clearly articulated that the objective of their engagement was to participate honestly in the study to explore how we could influence the project sponsor's decisions to attain the objectives of the projects.

3.6 Phases of the Data Collection and Analysis

There are many ways to design action research studies (Cassell and Johnson, 2006; Hartmann et al., 2009). In this research, I used the traditional action research approach, according to which the research process is understood as a cycle that consists of four steps: construction, planning, taking action and evaluation (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010). As demonstrated in figure 3.3., I collected the data in three phases and used multiple data collection methods. The phase-based approach allowed me to effectively engage the research participants in the study and confirm the participants' responses (Crawford et al., 2008; Helm and Remington, 2005; Kloppenborg et al., 2006; Parker and Mobey, 2004). Meanwhile, using multiple data collection methods helped to validate the collected data,

reduce the bias and enhance the credibility of the study (Dymond et al., 2006; Johnson et al., 2014; Sullivan et al., 2005; Takey and Carvalho, 2015).

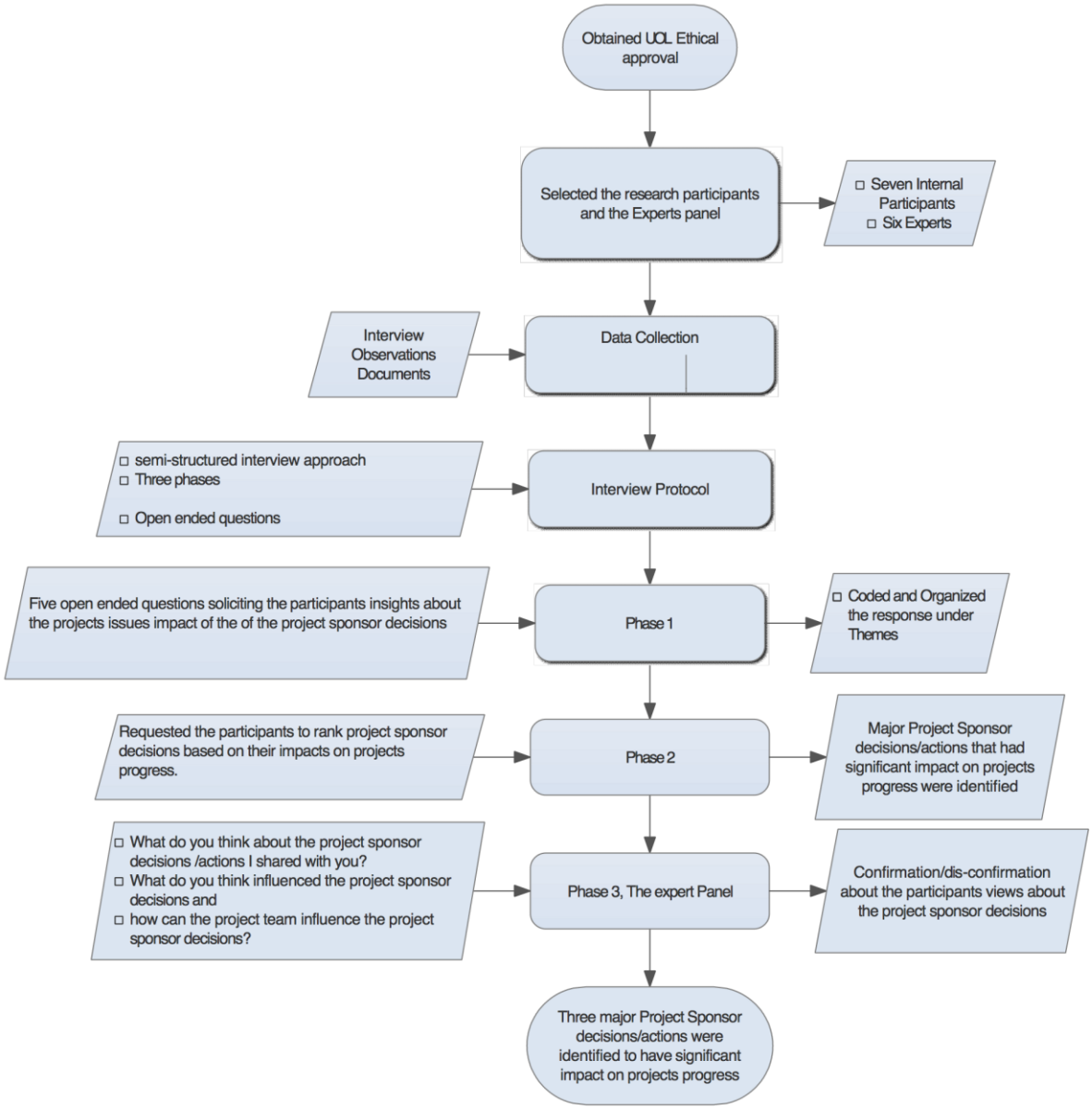

Figure 3.3: The research design process.

Figure 3.4 presents the research journey timeline, including the start and end of the three projects: A, B and C. Also, the details for the three data collection phases and the three action cycles are outlined.

	Task	Start	End
	Research & Projects Timeline	2/3/11	2/9/19
1	Project A	2/3/11	31/12/14
2	Project B	9/3/12	30/11/17
3	Project C	16/4/13	19/12/17
4	Ethical Approval	15/2/15	15/2/15
5	Literature Review	15/2/15	14/7/19
6	Data Collection and Analysis	15/1/16	15/12/17
6.1	Phase I data collection	15/1/16	15/11/16
6.2	Phase I data Analysis	16/11/16	28/2/17
6.3	Phase II data collection	14/5/17	30/6/17
6.4	Phase II data Analysis	1/7/17	31/8/17
6.5	Phase III data collection	1/9/17	31/10/17
6.6	Phase III data Analysis	1/11/17	15/12/17
7	Action cycles I ,II and III	1/3/17	8/11/17
8	Thesis Report	2/9/19	2/9/19

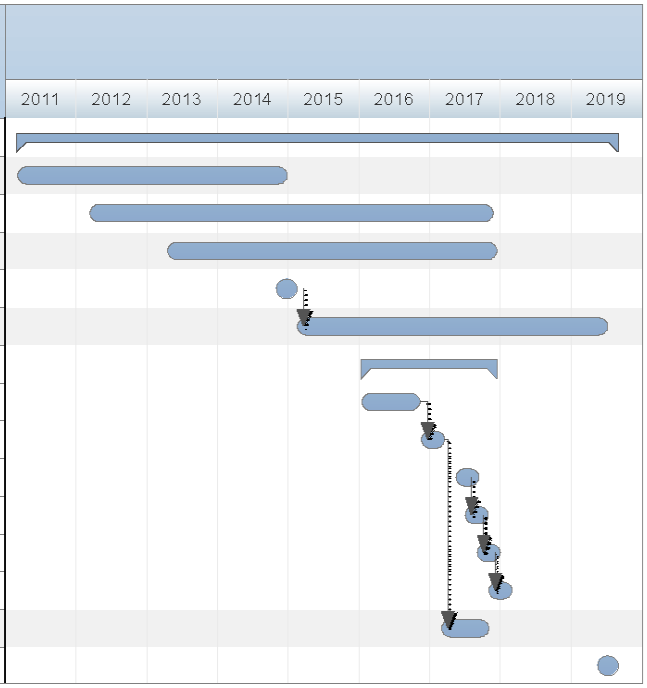

Figure 3.4: The projects and research timeline.

I used the action cycle approach by Coghlan and Brannick (2010)—construct, plan, take action and evaluate—to introduce change and influence the project sponsor's decisions. In total, there were three action cycles. Each action cycle examined one of the project sponsor's identified significant decisions. I applied the same process for all projects. However, for project A, no actions were taken—this was not possible, as project A was completed in December 2014, and I started the research in February 2015. The aim of studying the project sponsor's decisions concerning project A was to use project A's experiences and lessons learnt to influence the project sponsor so he did not repeat harmful decisions in projects B and C. In each cycle, as illustrated in figure 3.5, I addressed the three research questions, took actions to influence the project sponsor's decisions, evaluated the actions, and started another action cycle if the results of the evaluation indicated that the issue had not been resolved.

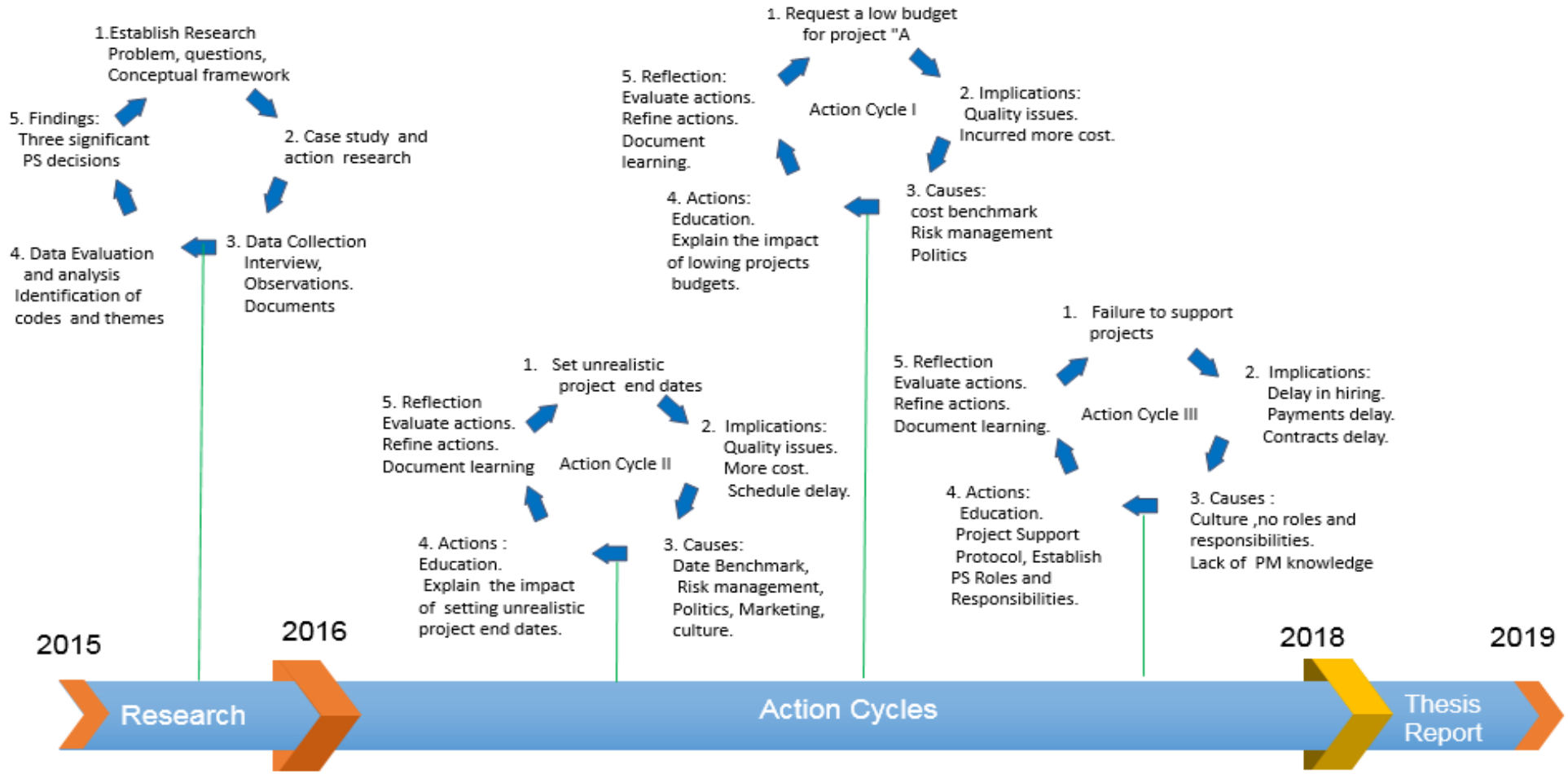

Figure 3.5: The research stages.

3.6.1 Phase One

The first phase of data collection was general; its purpose was to collect the internal participants' perceptions about the issues that affected the success of the projects. In the first phase, which began in January 2016, I conducted seven interviews with the internal participants. Each interview took an average of about 45 minutes, with the longest interview taking about an hour and a half and the shortest about 40 minutes. My choice of the interview method was affected by the nature of the project work environment (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Most of the interviews with the internal participants were conducted through telephone as most of the participants travel frequently to the project sites. Only two interviews were conducted face-to-face.

I observed that the main differences between the face-to-face and telephone interviews were that the face-to-face interview enabled the creation of social interactions between the researcher and the interviewees that helped build trust. In person, the researcher can observe the interviewee's body language and gestures. In addition, interruptions are normally fewer with face-to-face interviews and normally take more time than telephone interviews (Easterby-Smith et al, 2008). On the other hand, for the telephone interviews, the researcher does not need to select a location to conduct the interview. If the face-to-face interview does not involve travel, however, the telephone interview could be more costly than the face-to-face interview. Using more than one method to collect the study data helped overcome the limitations that would have accompanied using only one method (Greene et al., 2008).

Figure 3.3 illustrates the three phases of data collection and analysis. Five open-ended questions were used to solicit the participants' perceptions. I involved each participant in designing the interview schedule based on his availability. I started with a broad, general question to give the participants the freedom to share their views. I then requested that the participants identify which project management areas affected the project's progress (Carvalho et al., 2015). Next, I asked the participants to share their opinions about who they thought was responsible for each issue. It was also vital for me to request that the participants explain how the identified project management and cultural issues affected the project sponsor's decisions and actions. I requested that the participants provide examples to support their arguments. Finally, I inquired about the best strategies the project team could use to influence the project sponsor's decisions. At the end of each interview, I provided the opportunity for the participants to add any information that they thought would help the research (Jacob and Furgerson, 2012). I recorded the interviews and took notes during them. In addition, I used journaling to document my observations, interventions and reflections. Figure 3.6 illustrates how each journal was structured. I also reviewed the project's documents, such as schedules, progress updates, minutes of meetings, risk registers and contracts to validate and confirm some of the participants'

views and perspectives. The participants' responses to the phase one questions can be found in Appendix C1.

Date: 13 Jan 14

What happen?

Upon the delay to obtain the construction permit from the government, the project sponsor directed the project manager for project A to award a three months partial contract to the EPC contractor.

Who was Involved:

The Project Sponsor, Members of the Steering committee, the project manager and the PMO.

Analysis:

The Project Manager and PMO did not understand the rational for the direction to partially award the contract. They thought this decision might not help the project schedule. The EPC contactor may not be able to order any long lead equipment during this period (the delivery of the long lead equipment determines the project completion date). The Project manager advised to award a full contract since the possibility for the government to reject the approving the permit is almost null.

Actions:

The Project Manager could not influence the project sponsor to award the full contract. Accordingly the team proceeded with a partial contract award.

Reflection and Learning:

Later, the implications of the partial contract award emerged. The contractor could not apply for visas to mobilise his labour due you to the absence of signing a full contract. Accordingly, the project was forced to sign a full contract but after losing three-four months from the project schedule. I learned from this event that as a project manager and PMO we could not use the proper strategy to influence the project sponsor to award the full contract. The project sponsor took the decision for partial contract award without conducting proper risk assessment or soliciting the project experts' advice (Verzuh, 1999). Merrow (2011) argued that project sponsors should involve the project experts before making critical projects decisions. I learned that the organisational culture and politics influenced the project sponsor decision (Denison et al., 2003). The culture in the organization does not empower employees to make decisions related to their work, all decisions are made by management. Also, the project team failed to document the project sponsor decision. The project sponsor direction for partial contract was given over phone, and no meetings were scheduled to discuss the matter nor was the decision properly documented. Documentation is important because it help to identify responsibilities (Melymuka, 2004). Besides, the project manager should use the proper strategy to articulate the impact of the project sponsor decisions on the project (James et al., 2013).

Figure 3.6: Example of a research journal.

Upon completion of phase one of the data collection process, I commenced the data analysis. I started by transcribing the data collected from the interviews, notes and recordings. To facilitate the analysis, I used content analysis to interpret meaning from the text through reducing, coding and organising the data into themes (Stemler, 2001; Hsieh and Shannon, 2005; Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). In the interview transcript, I documented some of participants' quotations to use them in the discussion in support of their insights. I read the interview transcripts several times to identify and list the 78 issues that affected the progress of the projects. Out of 78 issues, 27 issues, or 34%, were primarily caused by the decisions of the project sponsor. I read through the transcripts and the journals, making marginal notes, and began forming the initial codes. I then coded the data, doing so manually because the project management field is broad and contains a great deal of functional language, acronyms and abbreviations used by project professionals. Creswell (2007) argued that computer coding is most helpful for large databases containing more than 500 pages of text.

Next I grouped related points to form ten codes concerning the factors that influenced the decisions of the project sponsor: communication, execution strategies, decision-making, logistics, bid negotiation, project resources, roles and responsibilities, project support, marketing and organisational culture. Then I combined similar codes under themes. Eventually, I was able to reduce and organise the data into eight themes: communication management, procurement management, time management, cost management, human resource management, risk management, marketing and organisational culture. Table 3.4 lists the identified themes and associated issues.

Theme	Issues
Communication Management	Lack of communication, management decisions including the rationales are not communicated to the project team.
	Last minute requests
Procurement Management	Did not select the optimum strategy and failed to comply with the requirements of the selected project strategy.
	Projects Fast Track
	Refused to advance the procurement of the extended leads
	Multiple price negotiations. Conducting two rounds of negotiations with bidders, one by the PMT and another by the Project Sponsor, to lower the potential bidders' price introduced quality issues to projects
Time Management	Unrealistic decisions (Determining project completion dates in advance before completing the engineering.
	Late decisions
Cost Management	Unrealistic decisions (Determining project completion dates in advance before completing the engineering, setting project budget before completing enough engineering).
Risk Management	Making decisions without conducting a proper risk analysis to identify and control risks (e.g. Partial Contract Award, Did not realise the impact of delaying the construction of the access roads)
Resource Management	Delay in mobilising key project resources (PM, Engineers)
	Appointment of a Project Team who lack the technical expertise in such types of projects.
	Misunderstanding of the role of project manager and contracting.
	Could not recognise the importance of Operations' involvement before finalising the project scope of work.
	Lack of clear roles and responsibilities among parties supporting the project.
	Limited interventions to facilitate support from other functions such as HR, finance, and procurement to the PMT.
	Failure to realise the importance of having enough offices to accommodate the project team & PMC in one place.
Organizational Culture	Lack of trust. Does not trust the capabilities of the PMT (Always critiques, no appreciation).
	Lack of cooperation between the project team and the support departments.
	The management does not practice what they preach.
	At disagreement, does not strive to reach to a win-win solution.
	People from different parts of the organisation do not share a common perspective. Projects coordination is difficult across different parts of the organisation.
	New ways to do things are not adapted. Attempts to create change usually meet with resistance.
	Ignoring internal customers' interest.
	Failure to learn from mistakes. Creativity, innovation, and risk-taking are not encouraged.
	There is no clear direction to give meaning to some of the management requests.
	The management sets goals that are unrealistic.
	The organisation's vision is not known to some employees.
Marketing	Marketing people decide the project schedule without the involvement of the project experts.

Table 3.4: The identified project sponsor themes and associated issues.

3.6.2 Phase Two

Phase two began in May 2017 after I organised the participants' responses to the phase one questions into themes, which were identified by combining responses about the same topic (Stemler, 2001). I shared with the participants by email a document covering the issues identified under each theme, asking them to comment within two weeks on my categorisation of the issues and rank the parties identified in phase one based on their level of influence on the progress of the projects. Through return emails, the participants generally endorsed my identification of the themes and believed they adequately covered all issues related to the project sponsor. Some participants sent minor comments about the theme selection. I also requested that participants rank the identified project sponsor's decisions and actions based on their level of impact on the success of the projects. The participants identified three major project sponsor decisions that significantly affected project progress. These decisions were imposing low project budgets, setting incorrect project durations and failing to support the project team in obtaining the required services from the organisation's departments. I agreed with the research participants on the need to focus the actions on these issues due to their significant impact on the success of the projects.

3.6.3 Phase Three

Phase three of the data collection commenced in September 2017. In this phase, I engaged the external participants in the study in order to alleviate the study's biases and increase its credibility (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). I used the expert panel to confirm or contradict the participants' views about the project sponsor's decisions (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006), ensure that internal biases were identified, gain an objective view of the main areas of concern and advise the research participants and myself on strategies that could be employed to influence the project sponsor's decisions.

I scheduled an individual meeting with each expert panel member. I explained the action research process and provided some background about the three projects that were the cases for this study. To capture the expert panel's insights, I sent them a different set of questions two weeks before scheduling the interview (see Appendix C1).

The interview process commenced after receiving confirmation from the panel members of their willingness to participate in the study. All interviews were conducted over the telephone. I began the interview with warm-up questions, asking for background information and soliciting the participants' insights into the characteristics and attributes of good sponsorship (Turner, 2010). Similar to the research participants' interview protocol, I used a semi-structured approach in which I asked open-ended questions to provide the expert panel members with the freedom to share their insights. I used

three main questions to engage the expert panel: ‘What do you think about the project sponsor decisions/actions I shared with you? ‘, ‘What do you think influenced the project sponsor’s decisions? ‘and ‘How can the project team influence the project sponsor’s decisions? ‘

Similarly to phase 1, I analysed the external participants’ responses using content analysis. I transcribed the data collected from the interviews’ notes and recordings. I read the transcription several times to identify common phrases and interpreted the data to identify common codes. I then manually coded the data and grouped related codes into themes. Table 3.5 lists the identified codes and themes.

Area	Codes	Theme
▪ The owner of the business case (venture philosophy marketing, location, feasibility, row material, schedule, cost, financing), set expectations. ▪ Select the Project Manager/the project team ▪ Sucre budget, and help resolve project issues. ▪ Assure projects is achieving their objectives and complying with procure and polices	▪ Develop The business case ▪ Secure Resources ▪ Provide Support ▪ Ensure Governance	Project Sponsor role
• Right Judgment, Interfere when there is a need if the project is off track. • Support the team while running through difficulties, Engage with the contractor's management to bring the project on track, if the project needs more money. • Accessibility: The team should go to him when they have a problem. The team should have an easy access to the PS. • Ensure everybody provide support the PM, accountable about the project failure. • Continue with the project from start until completion. • Inspire the team, commitment, and lead by example.	▪ Rational Decision Making ▪ Provide Support ▪ Accessibility and availability ▪ Ownership& accountability ▪ Continuity of the Sponsor ▪ Leadership	Good behaviours/decisions the project sponsor should practice

Area	Codes	Theme
• Micro management, interfere with the project manager responsibilities. • Develop the Business case without the input of the expert Project. • Sponsor walk away after singing the EPC contract. • The sponsor always wants to cut cost, though some of these costs have been considered in the original budget, Rush to meet the schedule, will not let the sponsor to listen to good strategies. • Give priority to personal interest over the project interest. • Lack of confidence or trust in the project team capabilities. • Lack of documenting lessons learned and learning from previous projects. • Replacing the project sponsor in middle of the project.	▪ Interfere in project details ▪ Does not involve project expect before making decisions ▪ Failure to support the team ▪ Set unrealistic targets ▪ Politics ▪ Lack of empowerment and trust ▪ Not learning from previous projects ▪ Discontinuity of the Project sponsor	Bad behaviours/decisions project sponsor should avoid
▪ No clear system to select sponsors. ▪ Forcing the project manager/team on the project sponsor and lack of authority to operate. ▪ The project duration is determined to meet a marketing objectives without having projects experts' inputs. ▪ Lack of empowerment and trust and giving priority to personal interest. ▪ The project sponsor is not accountable about the failure of the project. ▪ Commitment to customers and government agencies.	▪ The project sponsor selection process ▪ Lack of authority Marketing ▪ Lack of project management knowledge ▪ Organisational culture and Politics ▪ Lack of accountability ▪ External influence ▪	Factors that may influence the project sponsor decisions.

Area	Codes	Theme
▪ Use direct or indirect methods to educate the project sponsor about project management practices. ▪ Develop procedure to define the project sponsor roles and responsibilities. ▪ Get support from senior executives to help influence the project sponsor. ▪ Develop criteria to select and assign sponsors to projects. ▪ Use evidence and facts to demonstrate to the project sponsor the impact of his decisions on projects. ▪ Be honest, positive and proactive to build good relation with the sponsor.	▪ Educate the sponsor about project management ▪ Develop Roles and responsibilities ▪ Build alliances, ask for other executives support ▪ Develop criteria to select sponsors ▪ Use logic and facts to influence the sponsor ▪ Build good relationship with the sponsor	Strategies to influenc the project sponsor

Table 3.5: Phase Three codes and themes.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethics are essential not only to protect the anonymity of the participants but also to ensure that no one is harmed because of the research (Creswell, 2007). Following the University of Liverpool's (UoL's) ethical guidelines helped me separate the insider action researcher's role as a researcher from his role within the organisation. This ensured confidentiality and affirmed that the researcher would not use the information for any purpose other than research. Complying with ethics increases the credibility of a study, as the researcher will be honest whilst collecting the data, as well as when analysing and reporting findings.

I followed the UoL's ethical guidelines whilst conducting this study. Upon the approval of the UoL ethics committee for my research proposal, I commenced contacting the research participants and the external experts' panel. I explained the objectives of the study, requested that they sign the consent form and confirmed the confidentiality of their names, identities, organisations and all other sensitive information. I explained that the data would be coded and stored on a password-protected computer. Nobody except the researcher would have access to the data. It was also vital to inform the

participants that their participation was voluntary. All participants had the full right to decide whether to participate in the study. I explained that, even if they decided to participate, then changed their minds and elected to withdraw during the study, their decision would be entirely theirs and would be respected.

Furthermore, I clarified that my role as the principal researcher had nothing to do with my professional or organisational role. I made it clear that our research relationship would not affect our organisational relationship. The participants should not expect to gain additional organisational benefits because of their participation in the research; likewise, it would not be held against them if they elected not to participate in the study. All internal participants freely elected to participate. They knew that even if they elected to participate, then changed their minds, there would be no harm to our relationship because all of them were my peers except the project director, who was our manager.

The participants were advised that the primary method for data collection was the interview. They were informed that the interviews were being recorded. If they did not wish for the interview to be recorded, however, notes would be taken instead. I advised them that the collected data would be used only for the research. These details were shared with the participants in the Participants Information Sheet (PIS) sent to them, along with the consent form. A copy of the PIS can be found in Appendix A2.

3.8 Summary

In chapter three, I reviewed the research paradigms and methodologies (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Creswell, 2007). The results of the assessments led me to adopt the interpretive paradigm and qualitative case study methodology for this research. I used the qualitative case study methodology because it provided the opportunity to engage with the research participants in a collaborative process to examine the project sponsor's performance in the context of the three projects (Dooley, 2002. The qualitative case study enabled me to observe, interpret and attach meaning to the project sponsor's actions in a natural setting (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008), as well as to suggest and implement specific strategies to promote the project sponsor's awareness of the influence of some of his actions on the success of the projects.

The case study approach has some limitations, such as the lengthy process of data analysis and some scholars' view that it is not scientific or lacks credibility (Al Rubaie, 2002). Some researchers argue that generalising case study results is difficult (Zainal, 2007). To overcome these limitations, the data collection and analysis was conducted in three phases. Additionally, external participants were engaged in the study to provide new insights and help increase the credibility of the research results (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). Case studies can generate learning and knowledge that can be applied

to similar cases (Harland, 2014). It provided the mechanism for gaining a holistic understanding of the project sponsor's role and the complex interactions among the various variables that influenced the project sponsor's decisions.

4. The Action Research Approach

4.1 Introduction

Chapter four provides an overview of the action research approach, its features and its differences with other research approaches. The chapter demonstrates how researchers have used action research to study project management topics, the rationale for the historical unpopularity of action research among project management researchers and the effectiveness of action research to explore project management problems. I then discuss the characteristics of various forms of action research and its essential features to measure the quality of the action research. Finally, I demonstrate how I used the action research cycle to explore the project sponsor's role in the context of the three projects (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010).

4.2 Action Research

Over the past four decades, an action research approach has emerged as a new social research methodology (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). The action research philosophy is based on the principle articulated by Argyris (1994, cited in Coghlan and Brannick, 2010) that to understand something, one must try to change it. Action research is a collaborative and participative process that aims to study a real-life problem, take action regarding it and learn from the process (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). While qualitative research focuses on the past, action research considers the past and subsequently takes action in the present to shape the future (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010).

Unlike the conventional social science research approaches that focus on generating knowledge by explaining a phenomenon, the focus of action research is to generate knowledge by taking actions to resolve real-life problems (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). Practitioners of the action research approach like it because it enables them to conduct scientific research and to help resolve organisational problems. Action research also has some weaknesses, however. Its approach lacks generalisation; it is not easy to extend the research results to other cases (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003). The close relationship between the researcher and the research subjects may also introduce some subjectivity and bias. Furthermore, the action research process is complex and time-consuming (Kelvin, 2001).

4.3 Action Research and Project Management

The action research approach is popular among medical and educational researchers (Chivonne, 2014). It is not, however, a standard methodology for exploring and studying topics in project management. It is unclear why an action research approach is not widely used in the project management field, but several reasons are possible: first, there is an incorrect perception that action

research is a qualitative research method. In fact, action research can be either qualitative or quantitative (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010). Secondly, unlike the health and education fields (Chivonne, 2014), the project management field is not familiar with action research.

Action research has been used by researchers to study topics related to projects (Parker and Mobey, 2004; Hartmann et al., 2008; Chivonne, 2014). For example, Whitehead (2005) conducted a study to compare the action research and project management methodologies. He confirmed that there are similarities and differences between the two methods. He also, however, encouraged researchers not to restrict themselves to one methodology, but instead to seek the opportunity to use appropriate features from each method to study organisational issues. In another study, Takey and Carvalho (2015) used a mixed quantitative-qualitative research method, taking an action research approach to study the project management competence map at a Brazilian engineering firm.

Researchers like Parker and Mobey (2004), Hartmann et al. (2008) and Chivonne (2014) performed project management studies using the action research approach. The literature revealed that action research could address project management topics similarly to topics in the health, education and other social sectors. The researchers who used action research to study project management employed the same cyclic process in action research (construct, plan, take action, reflect) described by Coghlan and Brannick (2010). Some researchers, such as Takey and Carvalho (2015), combined action research with other quantitative methods. Therefore, I learnt from these studies that action research is a robust problem-solving approach that can be used separately or combined with other approaches to examine project management topics effectively.

4.4 Action Research Approaches

Different forms of action research emerged because of different philosophical assumptions (Cassell and Johnson, 2006). Action research promotes democracy and diversity and rejects the separation between action and thinking. It uses scientific research techniques and tools, such as data gathering, statistics, hypotheses, surveys and questionnaires, to name a few.

Cassell and Johnson (2006) categorised action research into five different approaches to facilitate the understanding of the various assumptions made in each approach. All of these approaches are experimental and are supported by the positivist paradigm. The inductive action research approach uses a qualitative method for data collection to produce a form of grounded theory. With participatory action research, organisational employees or people from the community participate actively throughout the research process, and the approach emphasises people's participation in a democratic research process. Deconstructive action research practices, conversely, promote a postmodernism paradigm.

I found the action research methodology relevant to my research study, as it enabled me to collaborate with the research participants to examine the project sponsor's role in the context of the three projects. In this research, the internal participants helped define the research problems and participated in identifying the project sponsor's major decisions that affected the success of the projects. They provided examples of how the project sponsor's decisions affected the projects. They also participated effectively in the planning procedures and took action to influence the project sponsor's decisions. The external participants provided a more objective view of the project sponsor's issues and the factors that might have influenced the project sponsor's decisions, defined the role and responsibilities of the project sponsor within projects and suggested strategies for working with the project sponsor.

4.5 Action Research Quality

For research to be scientific, it must conform to specific standards (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010). Rigour and relevance are among the most widely accepted criteria used to evaluate the quality of research (Anderson et al., 2001). Shrivastava (1987), in his effort to understand the relationship between rigour and relevance, developed criteria for assessing the rigour and relevance of research problems. He identified three criteria to measure the rigour of research: conceptual adequacy, methodological rigour and accumulated empirical evidence. Research complying with these criteria can be considered scientifically valid and sound. Shrivastava (1987) also specified five criteria to evaluate research based on its value to the business. These criteria are meaningfulness (the research addresses business problems), goal relevance, operational validity (the actions are clear and can be implemented), innovation (the research results provide a non-traditional solution to the problem) and cost of implementation (implementing the solution has a reasonable cost).

I used the action research cycle (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010) to explore the three significant decisions made by the project sponsor, as shown in Figure 4.1.

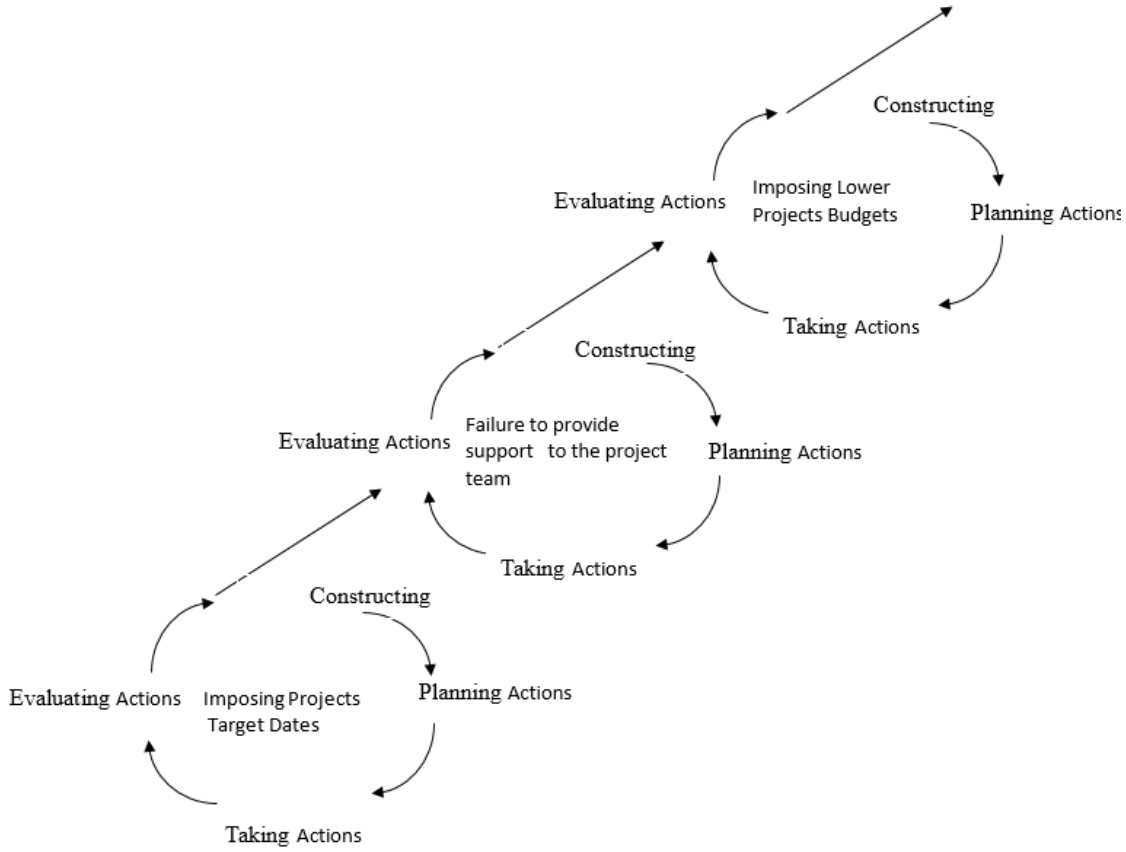

Figure 4.1: The three action research cycles. (Source: Coghlan and Brannick, 2010.)

For each decision, I tried to understand how the decision affected the project's success, what caused the project sponsor to make such decisions and how the research participants and I could influence the project sponsor's behaviours and actions to ensure that they were not repeated for similar decisions in future projects. As an insider researcher, I used the participatory action research approach to discover my workplace problem. I collaborated with the participants to investigate the project sponsor's decisions and actions and their effects on the projects' progress. I used participatory action research because of its ability to facilitate participant engagement in exploring the project sponsor's effect on a project's progress and planning and the implementation of effective change. Chapter six details the actions the participants and I took to influence the project sponsor's decisions. Participatory action research helps manage organisational politics (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010). The participants' support was vital to introducing change and influencing the project sponsor's decisions. Participatory action research reduced the likelihood of drawing false conclusions from the collected data and reduced the effect of the pre-understanding (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010). Furthermore, participatory action research enabled me to include in my action research study all three essential elements: action, research and participation (Greenwood and Levin, 2007).

I adapted Coghlan and Brannick's (2010) four-step action research cycle to introduce change into the organisation. Figure 4.1 illustrates the three action research cycle used to address three significant

project sponsor decisions: imposing a project's completion date, failing to provide the needed support to the project team and imposing a low project budget. In each action cycle, the four steps — constructing, planning, taking action and evaluating the action — were adopted.

In the constructing step, I worked with the research participants to describe the issues and concerns, including articulating how the issues affected the success of the project. After identifying the issues in the constructing step, in the planning step I performed a literature review to define the problem better and seek new insight into the factors that could influence the project sponsor's decisions. I then defined what I wanted to achieve and the actions I felt should be taken (Kotter, 1996). In the third step, I took action to address the issues identified in the constructing step. Finally, in step four, I evaluated the actions to check their effectiveness in resolving the identified issues. The results of the evaluation helped adjust and modify the actions for the next cycle.

4.6 Summary

Chapter four provided an overview of the action research approach and how I used it to address the research questions. Action research is not a popular approach for studying project management topics, but the few project management studies that have used it have demonstrated its capacity to examine project management topics effectively, either when used alone or when combined with other approaches (Parker and Mobey, 2004; Hartmann et al., 2008; Chivonne, 2014; Takey and Carvalho, 2015; Whitehead, 2005).

The research participants and I engaged in three action research cycles to explore the three significant project sponsor decisions that affected the success of the projects. We were able to identify the factors that influenced the project sponsor's decisions, articulate to the project sponsor the effect of his decisions on the success of the projects and promote his awareness of the importance of developing a project support culture and implementing the best project management practices for project success. The research participants and I planned and took actions that influenced the project sponsor's decisions (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010). Nevertheless, there were difficulties that I had to overcome, such as the organisational politics and the duality of my roles. Chapter six provides detailed discussions about the actions taken, their challenges and how I dealt with them.

5. Research Findings and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

Chapter five presents the results of using action research to explore the effect of the project sponsor's decisions on the success of projects. The chapter is structured around the three project sponsor's decisions that had significant effects on the success of the projects: the decision to lower the budget for Project A, the decision to set unrealistic project end dates and the failure to provide the support needed to the projects. The chapter starts by discussing the key themes identified in chapter three. The themes represent the factors that led the project sponsor to make the three significant decisions that affected the success of the projects. Then, for each of the three project sponsors' decisions and in alignment with the data analysis presented in chapter three, the chapter provides answers to the three research questions:

1. What are the implications of the project sponsor's decisions for the project's success?
2. What are the factors that influenced the project sponsor's decisions?
3. What are the strategies the research participants and I can use to influence the project sponsor's decisions?

Throughout the chapter, I use direct participants' quotations to validate the findings and provide insights into the participants' perceptions.

5.2 Key Themes and Discussion

As demonstrated in chapter three, the data analysis of 27 project issues caused by the project sponsor revealed that several factors led the project sponsor to cause these issues, which subsequently contributed to the delay of the three projects. As discussed in chapter one, the purpose of these projects was to build manufacturing plants and process water pipelines. The issues caused by the decisions of the project sponsor contributed to the delay of the three projects. Table 5.1 illustrates the start dates, planned completion dates and actual completion dates of the three projects.

Project	Scope	Contract Type	Start Date	Planned Finish Date	Actual Finish Date
A	Construction of a manufacturing plant	Engineering Procurement and Construction (EPC)	2011	2013	2014
B	Build 450KM water pipeline including pumping stations	Engineering Procurement and Construction (EPC)	2012	2015	2017
C	Construction of a manufacturing plant	Engineering Procurement and Construction (EPC)	2013	2016	2017

Table 5.1: The Details of the Three Projects.

I organised the factors that influenced the decisions of the project sponsor into eight key themes: organisational culture, marketing, communication management, risk management, time management, cost management, procurement management and human resources management. Figure 5.1 shows the three projects' sponsors' significant decisions and the associated themes that led the project sponsor to make them. Looking at Figure 5.1, one notices that six of the eight themes are related to areas of project management knowledge (PMI, 2013). This indicates that the lack of knowledge and experience about the project management practices and techniques had a significant level of influence on the performance of the project sponsor (Merrow, 2011; Carvalho et al., 2015).

Figure 5.1 also indicates that some factors, such as organisational culture and risk management, affected more than one project sponsor decision.

In my experience, the organisation strives to enhance the project manager's and project team's skills and competencies and pays less attention to developing the project sponsor for three main reasons: first, management underestimates the project sponsor's role. Management cannot imagine that the project sponsor could harm the success of the project (Melymuka, 2004). Second, the assignment of the project sponsor follows a trend (Abrahamson, 1991). It is becoming fashionable in Saudi Arabia for organisations to assign project sponsors and steering committees to their megaprojects. Third, the management does not fully understand the role of the project sponsors or the value they add to projects. I observed that when the management assigned the project sponsor, there were no charters or documents to define his roles, responsibilities or authority. It was left to the project sponsor to decide how he wanted to play his role. Organisations recognise the critical role the project sponsor plays with regard to project success but pay little attention to defining the role (James, 2000). Cooke-Davies (2005) argued that the role of the project sponsor remains relatively poorly defined and varies among organisations.

Other factors that influenced the project sponsor's decisions included the organisational culture and marketing (Merrow, 2011; Denison et al., 2006). The organisational culture affected how the projects were managed within the organisation (Ke and Wei, 2007). Organisational culture is important because it can influence the success of the projects (Pereverzev, 2011). The research participants shared some cultural traits that they believed affected the decisions of the project sponsor. For example, it was commonly understood that management makes almost all decisions; the employees are usually not involved in the decision-making process. This belief prevented the project sponsor from empowering the project team to make decisions related to their work. The project manager and his team were managing the project, so it was important that they be empowered to participate in making decisions that might affect their work (Merrow, 2011).

Another example is related to the appreciation of time. Projects are time-bound. Any delay in making decisions may affect the project's progress. The project sponsor, when asked to make decisions, sometimes took a long time without considering the implications of his delay for the project schedule. According to Lewis (2000), projects require a culture that appreciates time, knows how to engage and communicate with others, can plan and organise the work and has a sense of urgency.

The third factor that affected the project sponsor's decisions, as shared by the research participants, is its commitment to marketing targets: i.e. the date the organisation is planning to launch the product or services to market. Several factors may affect the determination of megaproject schedules; among them is the influence of marketing targets. Nevertheless, organisations must be careful while setting

project targets based on only one criterion, the marketing targets. Megaprojects are complex, with many uncertainties (Merrow, 2011). Setting the project's completion dates requires information about engineering, procurement and construction that are normally not available at the initiation of the project (Verzuh, 1999). To determine project completion dates with a reasonable degree of accuracy, at the very least the following activities need to be completed: the basic design including the detailed scope of work, the equipment list, the general arrangement and site development drawings, the process flow diagram and the electrical and single line diagrams (Gloria et al., 2011).

In the case of Project A, the project sponsor determined the project end date without consulting the project team. His decision was affected by the marketing date and his own personal objectives (Merrow, 2011). When the project sponsor determined the project completion date, he was not looking at the big picture but at the part that matched his interests and would achieve his objective (Brown, 2011; Homer, 2008). Setting project targets without consulting the project experts can thus pose a risk and increase the chances of missing the specified target date (Kemp, 2004; Lewis, 2000).

It is commonly understood that the commitment to achieving organisational objectives sometimes influences management's decision to impose a project's target date. Management, however, needs to allow the project team to carry out the standard project planning and scheduling activities to determine whether they can meet the specified target date. If the planning and scheduling exercise suggests that the required project completion date cannot be met using standard resources, then the project team must find alternatives or compress the schedule (Kemp, 2004). Schedule compression, however, may require management to provide more resources (PMI, 2013). If management does not agree, then it must accept the risk that the project may not be completed according to the specified target. The project manager may not be able to influence the project sponsor's decision to provide more time or additional resources, but the bottom line is that the project manager must articulate to the project sponsor the implications of his or her decision for achieving the project's objectives (James et al., 2013).

The next sections provide a detailed discussion about how a lack of project management knowledge, the organisational culture and the commitment to marketing targets led the project sponsor to make the three significant decisions and the available strategies the project manager can employ to influence the project sponsor's decisions.

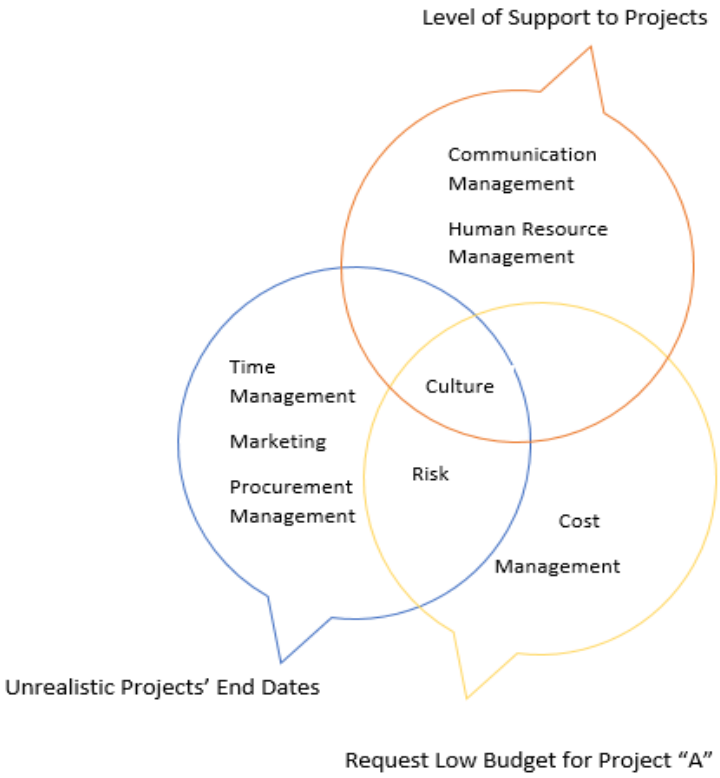

Figure 5.1: Classifications of the themes that affected the project sponsor's decisions.

5.3 The Project Sponsor's Decision to Request Low Budget for Project A

In this section I discuss the factors that led the project sponsor to direct the project team to request a low budget for Project A, the implications of this decision for Project A's success and the strategies the project team can use to promote the project sponsor's awareness of the benefits of using the best cost estimation and risk management practices. The research found three significant factors that led the project sponsor to request a low budget. Table 5.2 summarises these factors under three themes: cost management, risk management and organisational culture.

Decision	Themes	Issues
The Project Sponsor's Decision to Request Low Budget for Project "A"	Risk Management	Making decisions without conducting a full risk analysis to identify and control risks.
	Cost Management	Request to lower project cost estimates based on wrong assumptions.
	Organizational Culture	Lack of trust. Do not trust the capabilities of the PMT (Always critiques, no appreciation).
		Management set goals that are unrealistic.

Table 5.2: Summary of decision one themes and their associated issues.

The project cost estimate is among the essential parameters organisations use to measure a project's success (Merrow, 2011; Carvalho et al., 2015). The accuracy of the cost estimate is vital, as it is the basis for determining and approving the project budget and making the final investment decision (Verzuh, 1999). Inaccuracy in the initial project cost estimate can lead to project delays (Kesavan et al., 2015).

Requesting a low budget for Project A was the first project sponsor decision identified by the research participants that had a significant effect on the success of Project A. The project sponsor had directed the project manager to keep the project cost estimate under USD $50M to facilitate the project's approval. I tried to explain to the project sponsor that the project's budget should not have been set before completing the design (Lind and Brunes, 2014). The project sponsor, however, directed that the budget was to be kept under USD$50M. He later added during the execution phase that the project team could request additional funds if required. The research found that the direction to limit the project budget before acquiring enough information about the project and finalising the project basic engineering was a mistake (PMI, 2013).

Planning and Control Manager N indicated:

> *"The basic engineering consultant cost estimate was not accurate. It did not include essential cost elements, such as contingency, owner cost or escalation. The consultant estimate was affected by the project sponsor direction to keep the project cost within USD $50M".*

Project Director A said:

> *"It is fine to put constraints on a project's budget; you need, however, to understand the effects of such restriction on the project's success".*

The determination of a project cost estimate is always a political decision (Brown, 2011). Management will sometimes lower the project cost estimate to gain approval. An external GM project consultant seconded this notation. He stated:

> *"It is a big dilemma when the project sponsor does not involve the subject matter experts before presenting the project to management. Unfortunately, some sponsors will lower the project cost to obtain approval".*

Lowering the project cost estimate to gain approval for the project is a common mistake that organisations make (Lichtenberg, 2016). Brown (2011) argued that incorrect cost estimates occur for two main reasons: allocating insufficient time to deal with uncertainty and the desire for some sponsors to have a low-cost estimate to help sell the project to management. Gloria et al. (2011)

affirmed that, to develop a firm cost estimate, the project estimate should be carried out using a bottom-up approach after completing the basic design and having the required information available.

5.3.1 Factors Leading the Project Sponsor to Request a Low Budget for Project A

To answer the second research question regarding the factors that influenced the project sponsor's decisions, there was consensus among both internal and external participants that three primary factors could have affected the decision of the project sponsor to lower the budget for Project A. The first factor was the desire to achieve a personal performance objective.

The project's Final Investment Decision (FID) is an important milestone in any project (Merrow, 2011). The FID is the date that management approves and authorises the actual execution of the project. The project sponsor was not keen to miss the FID milestone because it was directly linked to his performance. Therefore, by lowering the project budget, he facilitated the meeting of the FID target because the organisation's management would not object to approving the project. In addition, the project sponsor was not accountable for the success or failure of the project. Therefore, he focused on achieving his objectives and did not care very much whether the budget was sufficient to complete the project. The research participants supported this interpretation of the situation.

External Project Manager T felt that:

> *"Sometimes management intentionally lowers the project capital cost just to sell the project and achieve personal KPIs".*

Project Manager S said:

> "*Because the project sponsor was not accountable for the success or failure of the project, he was making decisions without considering the implications of the decisions on the success of the project".*

O'Brochta (2010) argued that a project sponsor's view of project management differs from the view of the project manager. Project managers view project management as a reflection of their personal performance, while project sponsors view project management as a means to an end or a way to achieve their strategic objectives.

The second factor related to the project sponsor's knowledge and understanding of project management in general and of cost estimation practices in particular (O'Brochta, 2010*)*. The project sponsor's lack of knowledge about and experience with project management practices are among the most significant issues that lead megaprojects to fail (Merrow, 2011).

Project Director A indicated that:

> *"One of the issues that affect projects' success is the improper selection of project sponsors. Project sponsors who come from an operational or marketing background do not understand the basics of managing megaprojects. Some project sponsors must be enrolled in a development programme in project management to understand the basics of managing projects".*

One External EVP of Petrochemicals M said:

> *"The lack of project management experience influenced the project sponsor's ability to realise the impact of his decisions on the project success".*

The participants agreed that a project sponsor does not need to be an expert in project management like the project manage but that he or she at least needs to understand how projects are managed. He or she needs to understand that a project cannot be managed like a plant operation. Megaprojects are complex and require skills in many areas, such as communication management, time management, risk management, cost management and human resources management. As a leader, the project sponsor is expected to support the project manager in dealing with external parties and gain the necessary support from the organisation's departments.

The third factor is related to the influence of the organisational culture (Denison et al., 2006). Project A's sponsor did not involve the project team when deciding on the project budget, as the culture in the organisation did not support the involvement of the employees in decisions (Ke and Wei, 2007). Management in my organisation make the majority of decisions and do not explain their reasoning for unrealistic requests or decisions to employees.

External GM of Project Consultancy L, in referencing cost estimates, indicated that:

> *"Sponsors must involve the subject matter experts to calculate the project cost; otherwise, there will be a very high risk of budget overrun".*

When I tried to understand the rationale for determining the USD $50M budget, the project sponsor explained that he had reached this figure by benchmarking to a similar project the organisation had completed around ten years prior. Benchmarking is an acceptable cost estimation method, but it needs to be done correctly (Verzuh, 1999).

External Project Manager T said:

> *"One of the causes for setting low project budgets is improper benchmarking to previous projects".*

The project sponsor performed a straightforward benchmark to a project of similar size that was completed ten years prior without adjusting or correcting the estimate to consider factors like escalation or inflation (Kemp, 2004). To develop a sound estimate using the benchmarking approach, professional estimators should carry out the estimation and the organisation should have a database of past projects that is regularly updated to reflect changes in materials, labour, escalations and inflations (Lind and Brunes, 2014).

5.3.2 Implications of the Project Sponsor's Decision to Request a Low Budget for Project A

The decision to lower the budget for Project A had implications for the success of the project. When I asked a question to clarify how requesting a low project budget could affect the project's success, the research participants explained that the decision for the low project budget forced the project team to accept a low-quality contractor. The project documents indicated that for Project A only three contractors submitted Engineering Procurement and Construction (EPC) bids. The evaluation of the bids revealed that two bidders' prices were competitive, while the third bidder's price was almost three times lower than the other two bids. The third bidder's cost was slightly above the approved budget. Hence, the evaluation team decided to negotiate with the third bidder and ignored the other two bidders, as their prices were too high. Accordingly, management negotiated with the third bidder, negotiating a reduction in his price to USD $50M before he was awarded the contract.

When the construction activities commenced, the project team observed many quality issues and defects. The project quality documents listed a massive number of quality defects and instances of non-conformance to project specifications. Despite several meetings with the contractors' management to discuss the issues and encourage the contractor to comply with the project specification and schedule, the contractor could not improve the quality of his deliverables or recover the delay.

After investigation, it was discovered that the contractor was supplying low-quality materials and workmanship to save money. The contractor acknowledged that his offered project price was low because he wanted to win the project and establish a presence in the Saudi market. The project team's selection for the contractor was a mistake, as it was driven by cost (Hasmori et al., 2018). The project team should have rejected this contractor because it was an outlier.

Organisations should be careful when awarding contracts to a very low-bid contractor because it will most likely have difficulty meeting the project specifications, cost and schedule. This proves the PMI (2013) triple constraint concept correct. The triple constraint triangle consists of the quality, cost and schedule. Whenever there is a change in one dimension, the other two dimensions will be affected.

In addition, organisations should not evaluate contractors based on only one criterion, price; they instead need to develop a multi-criteria system to evaluate contractors. The evaluation criteria could include the schedule, cost, financial position, the contractor's experience in executing similar projects, the competence of his/her key resources, the quality and safety management system and the after-sales services.

The Planning and Control Manager N said:

"We made a big mistake when we accepted this contractor".

The selection of a low-quality contractor affected not only the project quality but also the other essential project parameters, such as schedule and cost (Verzuh, 1999). Eventually, the project team hired a subcontractor to rectify the quality defects and secure the project. The contract with the EPC contractor was terminated. By completion, the project had incurred additional costs, and the schedule had been delayed by approximately six months, a 50% increase over the original project schedule. Underestimating project costs at the start of a project, then, can lead to project costs overrunning (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003, cited in Lind and Brunes, 2014).

The second implication for the project sponsor's decision to lower the budget of Project A was the effect on the project team's careers and succession within the organisation. Merrow (2011) argued that megaprojects are career creators or career destroyers. During the construction phase, the project ran out of money, so the project team requested supplementary funding to complete the project. The organisation's management, who were not aware of the challenges faced by the project, thought the budget overrun was a result of the failure of the project team to furnish a sound cost estimate. The project team became the scapegoat (Merrow, 211). Figure 5.2 summarises how the lack of project management knowledge and experience, along with the organisational culture and politics, led the project sponsor to direct the project team to lower the budget of Project A, along with the resulting effect of this decision on the project's schedule, cost and quality.

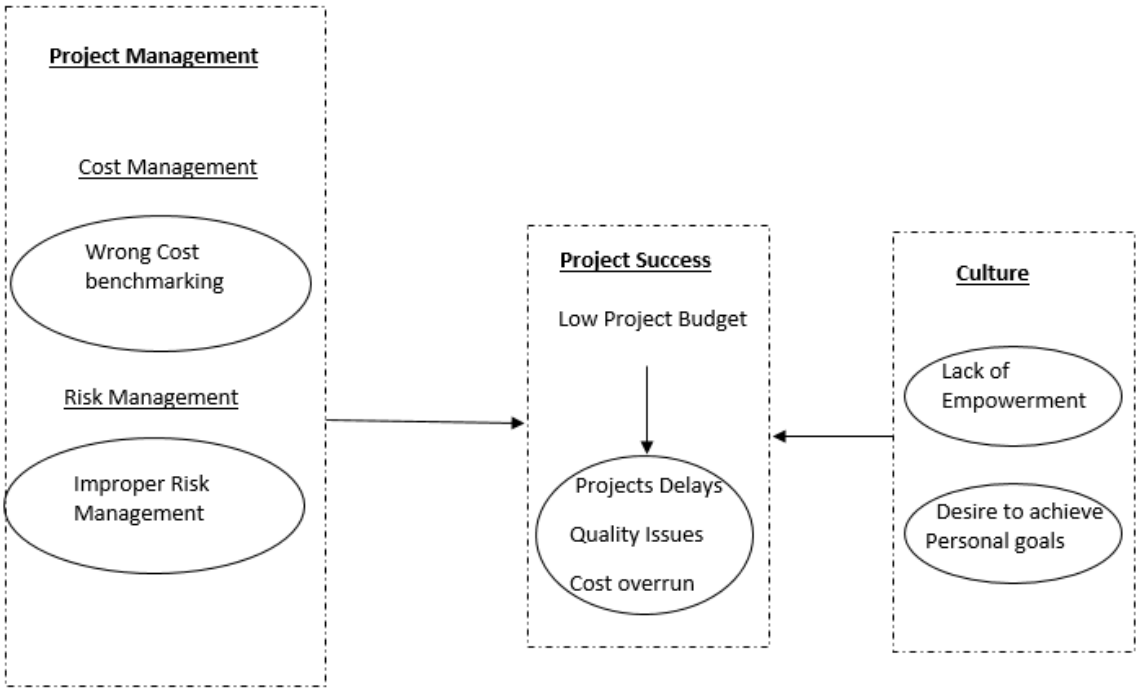

Figure 5.2: Effect of decision one factors on project success. (Adapted from: Carvalho et al., 2015.)

5.3.3 Strategies to Encourage the Project Sponsor to Embrace the Best Cost Estimation Practices

Project cost issues are regular problems in megaprojects (Flybjerg et al., 2003). There are, however, ways to avoid them. To overcome the project sponsor's lack of knowledge about project management practices, the participants collectively believed that education was the best solution. The knowledge and application of project management practices can help projects to success (PM, 2011). Applying the best project management practices alone, however, cannot guarantee the success of a project. Project managers must extend their focus beyond the boundaries of the project to encourage the project sponsor to act in the interest of the project (O'Brochta, 2010).

External GM, Project Consultancy L, said:

> *"The solution is to develop clear roles and responsibilities and educate the project sponsor about project management practices. The education should be given indirectly".*

Walker (2012) suggested that the project sponsor and project manager engage in a partnership. Therefore, while the project sponsor advises the project manager about organisational culture, policies and procedures and how to manage stakeholders, the project manager should educate the project sponsor about project management practices, tools and techniques. The project sponsor

should create a positive project culture that empowers, engages and involves the project team in making decisions related to their work (Denison et al., 2006).

An External Project Consultant M said:

> *"The project sponsor should treat the project team with respect and dignity, and he should not treat them subserviently".*

In addition, the project manager should strive to maintain a good relationship with the project sponsor, be honest, gain his/her trust and identify his/her expectations from the beginning of the project (Londono and Swain, 2015). The project manager can use a persuasive strategy to demonstrate the benefits that can be gained from applying the best project management practices (Fu et al., 2004). In short, the project manager must learn how to sell project management techniques (Greengard, 2007).

As a long-term solution, James et al. (2013) recommend that organisations create a project sponsor development programme. The programme objective is to educate and develop project sponsors to master the essence of project management practices and techniques. Potential project sponsors should be enrolled in this type of programme before they are assigned any projects.

To sum up, the research found that the decision to direct the project team to lower the budget of Project A was a mistake (Merrow, 2011). The project sponsor did not allow the project team to follow the best cost estimation practices because he wanted to facilitate the project's approval and gain credit for himself (Brown, 2011). The project team were also mistaken when they did not correctly document the project sponsor's request to lower the budget for the project.

The research identified three major factors that led the project sponsor to request a lower budget: the lack of project management knowledge and experience about the project estimation and risk management practices (Gloria et al., 2011), the organisational culture and the desire to achieve personal objectives (Denison et al., 2006).

The research found strategies that can help promote a project sponsor's awareness of the benefits of applying best cost estimation practices. First, the project manager and the project team need to maintain a good relationship with the project sponsor to gain his or her trust (Londono and Swain, 2015). They then need to educate the project sponsor on project management practices (James et al., 2013). This is then reinforced with the use of logic and facts to demonstrate the implications of the failure to implement the project management practice for the projects' performance (Fu et al., 2004). Figure 5.3 summarises the first significant project sponsor decisions, including the factors that led him to request a low budget for Project A, the implications of this decision for the project cost, schedule

and quality and the strategies the project team can use to encourage the project sponsor to take actions that support project success.

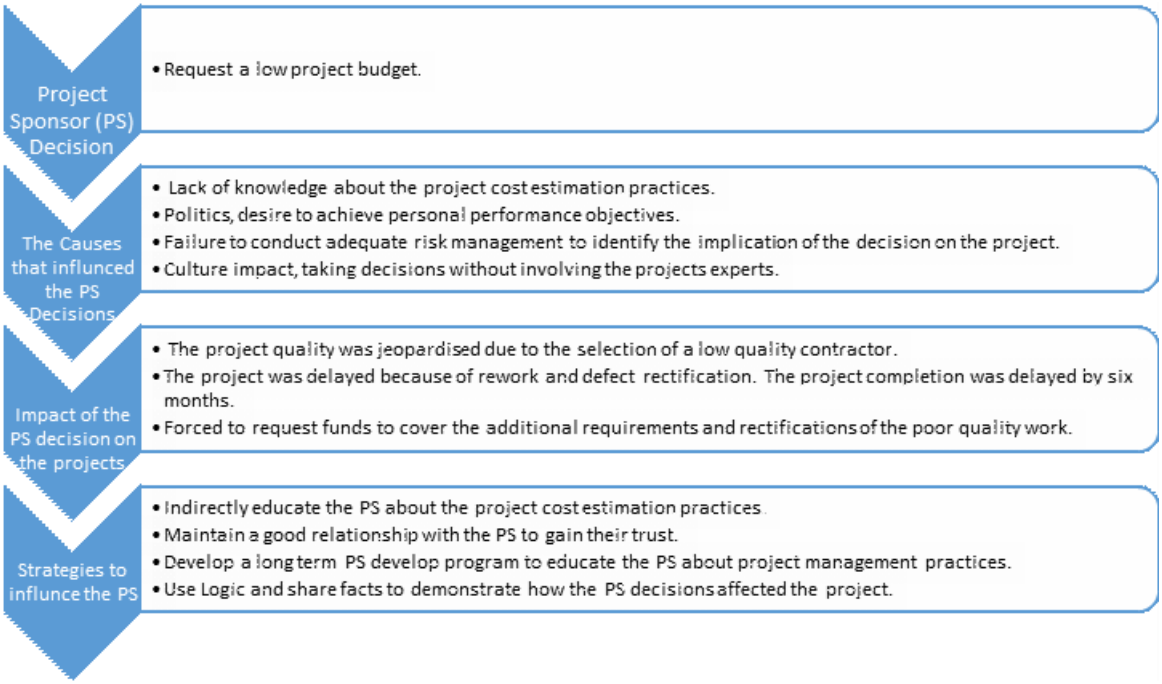

Figure 5.3: Summary of decision one factors, implications and strategies.

5.4 The Project Sponsor's Decision to Set Unrealistic Project End Dates

This section discusses the issues that led the project sponsor to impose unrealistic project end dates, the implications of that decision on the success of the projects and the strategies the project team can use to promote the project sponsor's awareness of the importance of using best project planning and scheduling practices to determine project completion targets. The research found nine key issues that led the project sponsor to impose unrealistic projects end dates. Table 5.3 summarises these issues under four themes: time management, risk management, marketing and organisational culture.

The project completion date is an important milestone: it is the date when the organisation can start realising the benefits of the project. Modern project management pays great attention to the project's planning and scheduling process (PMI, 2013). Good project planning and scheduling helps the project team manage the project's activities and avoid surprises and ensures its safety and quality (Verzuh, 1999).

Decision	Themes	Issues
The Project Sponsor's Decision to Impose Unrealistic Projects' End Dates	Procurement Management	Did not select the optimal procurement strategy.
		Failed to comply with the requirements of the project strategy selected.
		Refused to advance the procurement of the long lead Items.
		Multiple price negotiations. Conducting two rounds of negotiations with bidders to lower bids price.
	Time Management	Setting unrealistic projects targets dates.
		Delay in taking decisions.
	Risk Management	Making decisions without conducting a thorough risk analysis to identify and control risks.
	Organizational Culture	Lack of trust.
		Do not trust the capabilities of the PMT (Always critiques, no appreciation).
		The management set unrealistic goals.
		New ways to do things are not adapted.
		Attempts to create change usually met with resistance.
	Marketing	Need to take advantage of the improved market prices.

Table 5.3: Summary of decision two themes and their associated issues.

The accuracy of the project schedule depends on the availability of information, the competence of the scheduling and planning team, the selection of the correct scheduling method and the tools and techniques used (Lewis, 2000; Yang, 2007). The project schedule and project cost are often connected (Davies, 2002). The project schedule is a roadmap that guides the project's execution. Organisations are keen to meet the projects' planned schedules, as project delays influence the organisation's ability to achieve its objectives. When projects are delayed, the project will likely incur an additional cost, the quality may be affected, claims may be introduced and disputes may arise with contractors (Johansen et al., 2016).

In Project A, before completing the basic engineering, the project sponsor directed the project team to complete the project within 12 months after awarding the EPC contract. Similar behaviour was repeated for Projects B and C; the project sponsor set unrealistic project completion dates.

Project Director A said:

> *"In Project C, the management directed us to complete the project within 24 months, while a similarly sized project requires 30–36 months to be completed".*

The management's direction contradicted the best project management practices that emphasise the need to use sound planning and scheduling to determine project schedules (PMI, 2013). For

megaprojects, durations are determined after completing the necessary engineering and obtaining firm quotes from equipment suppliers and contractors (Merrow, 2011).

The external GM of Project A said:

> *"To determine project durations, one needs to follow the proper project planning and scheduling practices as suggested by the specialised project management bodies, such as the PMI".*

5.4.1 Factors that Led to the Project Sponsor's Decision to Set Unrealistic Project End Dates

The research found three factors that led the project sponsor to impose unrealistic project completion targets before finalising the basic engineering. The first factor was related to the market. The market price forecast indicated that the products' prices were improving and expected to remain high for the following five years. The project sponsor wanted to complete the projects as soon as possible to gain the benefits of the high market prices. The project sponsor request was legitimate, but it would have been beneficial if the project sponsor, before determining unrealistic end dates, consulted the projects' experts on the feasibility of achieving the proposed dates. Merrow (2011) argued that one organisational mistake that creates trouble for projects is when the marketing people determine the project's end date without consulting the project staff.

The external GM for Project L said:

> *"Sometimes the market conditions imply specific project completion dates. Therefore, the marketing is driving the project sponsor to impose unrealistic completion target dates. Some project sponsors listen to the project team's perceptions and advise. However, other project sponsors do not listen to the project team at all and insist that the project team meet the specified project completion date, even though it is not realistic".*

The second factor was related to an incorrect benchmarking to a similarly sized project. The organisation had completed a project the same size as Project A around ten years prior in twelve months. Therefore, the project sponsor thought that, since the two projects were similar in size, the twelve-month deadline seemed reasonable. Benchmarking to previous projects can be used as a guide to determine similar projects' durations. The benchmarking process, however, must be done right because each project is unique (PMI, 2013). To prepare a sound schedule using the benchmarking approach, the planning and scheduling should be carried out by professional planners, and the organisation should have a database of past projects that is regularly updated to reflect changes in equipment and material deliveries, labour productivity and individual project requirements, such as location or weather conditions, that must be considered (Verzuh, 1999).

External Project Manager T said:

> *"One of the reasons that leads to project failures is an incorrect benchmark to old projects that were completed a long time ago. We cannot benchmark a project that was completed ten years ago with a project that starts now, even if they are similar in size".*

Project Engineering Manager A said:

> *"The benchmarking can be used as a guide only to estimate the project duration. To determine an accurate project duration, detailed planning and scheduling exercises must be performed".*

Project A's documents indicated that the project sponsor's direction to complete the project within one year contradicted the engineering consultant's project estimated duration. The engineering consultant estimated that the project would take at least 18 months to complete. Despite the engineering consultant's advice, the project sponsor instructed the project team to complete the project within 12 months from the EPC contract award date.

The third factor is the effect of organisational culture. It is common practice in the organisation for the management to make decisions and for employees merely to execute them. The lack of an empowerment culture prevented the project sponsor from listening to the project team's advice around the feasibility of the proposed project end date (Denison et al., 2006). The culture prevented the project sponsor from accepting the suggested alternate procurement strategy (Al-Tabtabai, 2002) to speed up the project execution.

Project Engineering Manager A said:

> *"In this company, there is a lack of confidence in the Saudi team. It is a culture; they do not buy ideas from Saudis. They only listen to expatriates".*

Project Manager S said:

> *"The project sponsor does not trust the project team. That is why he is not listening to their suggestions".*

5.4.2 Implications of the Project Sponsor's Decision to Set Unrealistic Project Durations

The failure to complete projects in line with their planned project schedule is a common issue in industrial projects (Faridi and El-Sayegh, 2006). Scholars and practitioners believe that one of the critical factors of project failure is poor planning (Kempt, 2004; Merrow, 2011; Lewis, 2000). Several factors affect project planning and scheduling, including incomplete scope, failure to account for the

project risks, false assumptions and the competence of the staff who prepare the schedule (Verzuh, 1999; Lewis, 2000).

The research participants understood that one factor that motivated the project sponsor to fast-track the project was his desire to complete the project quickly and reap the benefits of high product market prices. They were surprised, however, by the reluctance of the project sponsor to accept using alternative execution strategies to expedite the project activities (Al-Tabtabai, 2002). The project sponsor was not aware of the different procurement and execution strategies that could have been used to facilitate the fast-tracking of the project's execution.

Project Director M said:

> *"The lack of knowledge and experience in project management practices affected the project sponsor's ability to understand the project's management dynamics".*

The project sponsor did not consider the effect of his decision to set aggressive completion target dates on the success of the projects.

External GM Project L said:

> *"Project sponsors make decisions without really understanding the impact of their decisions on the performance of the project".*

External Project Consultant M said:

> *"Speeding and fast-tracking projects is never a good idea. It seems ideal in the beginning. However, it will create problems later"*.

Scholars and practitioners advise projects to use the best planning and scheduling practices to determine the project completion date and avoid selecting dates randomly (Kemp, 2004; Lewis, 2000).

The External GM of Project A said:

> *"We should follow the proper planning and scheduling practices to determine project completion dates….I do not know what motivated the project sponsor to impose the unrealistic project completion date, but unfortunately, you are not alone — imposing unrealistic project completion target dates is a common practice in most Saudi Arabian organisations".*

External EVP of Petrochemicals M said:

> *"The project sponsor normally sees the big picture; however, before making significant decisions, he should consult the experts".*

The project sponsor's decision to set unrealistic project end dates had implications for the projects' actual completion dates. At completion, Project A had been delayed by around six months. Projects B

and C were delayed by 21 months and ten months, respectively. Figure 5.4 summarises how the incorrect schedule benchmarking, the lack of knowledge about alternative procurement strategies, the influence of the market and the influence of the organisation's culture affected the project sponsor's decision to impose unrealistic project end dates.

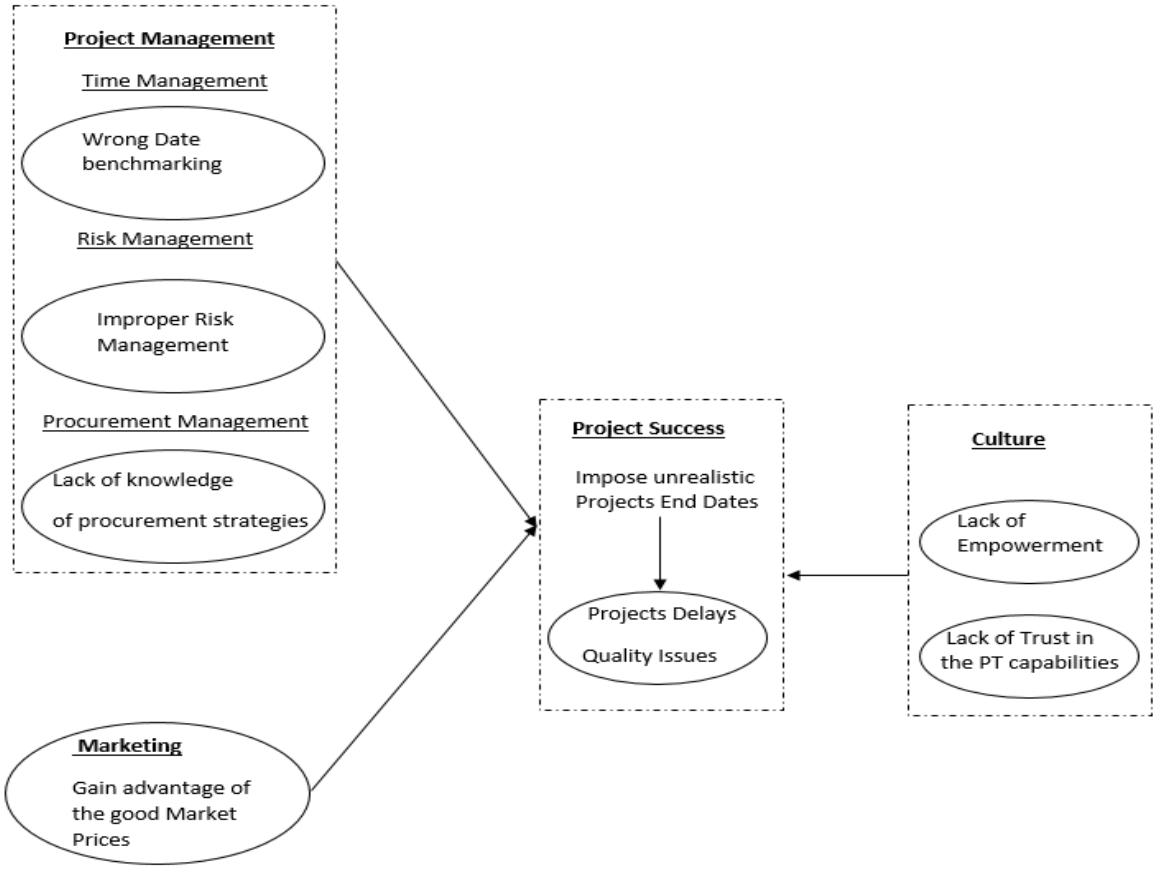

Figure 5.4: Effect of decision two factors on project success. (Adapted from: Carvalho et al., 2015.)

5.4.3 Strategies to Encourage the Project Sponsor to Set Realistic Project End Dates

Project managers need to know how to guide project sponsors towards acting in the best interest of project success (O'Brochta, 2010). The research found a range of strategies the research participants and I could use to influence the project sponsor and encourage him to embrace the best project management planning and scheduling practices. The participants perceived that the necessary knowledge about the process and techniques to determine the project's duration was an essential skill for any project sponsor.

External GM Project L said:

> *"When the project sponsor is educated on project management practices, he supports you. However, when he is unaware, he will be your enemy without being aware".*

James et al. (2013) suggested strategies to influence different types of project sponsors. They laid out tactics for working with busy sponsors, uninterested sponsors, inexperienced sponsors, untrained sponsors, sponsors who want to be project managers and sponsors who get involved in the project too late. Walker (2012) suggested that project managers educate inexperienced sponsors if feasible.

External Project Manager T said:

> *"Build a good relationship with the project sponsor and work closely with him, try to educate the sponsor about project management techniques indirectly and always keep them up to date".*

Another strategy that the project team can use is the use of logic to explain the implications of some of the project sponsor's decisions on the project's success. James et al. (2013) suggested three approaches: the request, logical and allegiance approaches.

The request approach enables project managers to positively and politely present their argument logically and justify their stance with facts. The allegiance approach provides the chance to gather the support of others who can have some influence on the project sponsor. The allegiance approach is like the Kotter building collation strategy to support change (Kotter, 1996). From a different perspective, Melymuka (2004) advised organisations to be proactive and try to appoint the right sponsor to the right project at the beginning.

Project Director A said:

> *"The project sponsor must be selected carefully, they should have charisma and they should know how to manage people. They should be part of the solution, not part of the problem".*

External Project Manager T said:

> *"Some organisations do not have clear criteria when selecting projects' sponsors. Normally, they select the project sponsor from the division that owns the project".*

The project manager should always maintain mutual respect with the project sponsor, earn his confidence, be honest by putting the facts on the table and be flexible and willing to adjust his or her leadership style to better engage with the project sponsor (Londono and Swain, 2015). The expert panel advised that if it was impossible to influence the project sponsor's decisions, then it would be best to avoid getting into a dispute or conflict. Trying to convince him or her using logic and requesting help from other executives from the organisation, or even a third-party consultant, might be more effective.

External GM Project L said:

> *"Do not enter into a debate with the project sponsor. If he requests a bid discount, go and request that the bidders reduce their prices. Besides that, try to avoid conflict with the project sponsor as much as possible".*

Project Director M said:

> *"If you are unable to influence the project sponsor, you can hire an independent third-party consultant to recommend best practices".*

In summary, determining projects' end dates before having enough information about the details of the projects is not good practice (Yang, 2007). Megaprojects are complex and require professional planners to develop the project plan. Project executives setting a project end date without consulting experts pose a risk and increase the chances of missing the specified target date (Kemp, 2004; Lewis, 2000). Project sponsors should not attempt to impose projects' end dates but should instead engage the project experts to advise on how the specified dates can be achieved. Unfortunately, in my experience and also as indicated by some of the research participants, it is a common but unhealthy practice in Saudi Arabia that the management or the marketing people determine megaprojects' end dates without consulting the projects' experts. This practice does not comply with best practices for determining a project's completion target date.

To resolve this issue, before committing to any project completion dates, the marketing people should involve the project experts to validate the feasibility of completing the project by the proposed date. If the date is not feasible, the project experts should advise on what it will take to meet the date or suggest alternative dates. The project manager should not simply accept unrealistic project completion dates. If he or she cannot convince the project sponsor to change the date, he or she should perform a schedule risk analysis for all options to determine their risks, document them and clearly explain the anticipated implications of each option.

The research found three major factors that influenced the project sponsor's decision to set unrealistic project end dates. The first was the market; the project sponsor wanted to complete the projects early and reap the benefits of the high product market prices. The second factor was incorrectly benchmarking to old projects and a lack of understanding of the right project scheduling and alternate procurement strategies (Verzuh, 1999; Al-Tabtabai, 2002). Finally, the organisational culture (Denison et al., 2006) prevented the project sponsor from empowering and trusting the project expert's ability to propose reasonable project completion dates. The project sponsor's decision to set unrealistic project end dates had significant implications for the projects' actual completion dates. At completion,

this resulted in Project A being delayed around six months, Project B by 21 months and Project C by ten months.

The research found strategies that could help promote the project sponsor's awareness of the benefits of applying the best project planning and scheduling practices. Some of these strategies include establishing a project sponsor development programme (PMI, 2014), indirectly educating the project sponsor about the project's planning and scheduling, establishing a good relationship with the project sponsor to gain his or her trust (Londono and Swain, 2015) and using logic supported by facts to demonstrate the consequences of not applying the best project management practices (James et al., 2013). Figure 5.5 summarises the second significant decision by the project sponsor, including the factors that led him to set unrealistic project completion dates, the implications of this decision for the success of the projects and the strategies the project team could use to help the project sponsor take action to further the success of the projects.

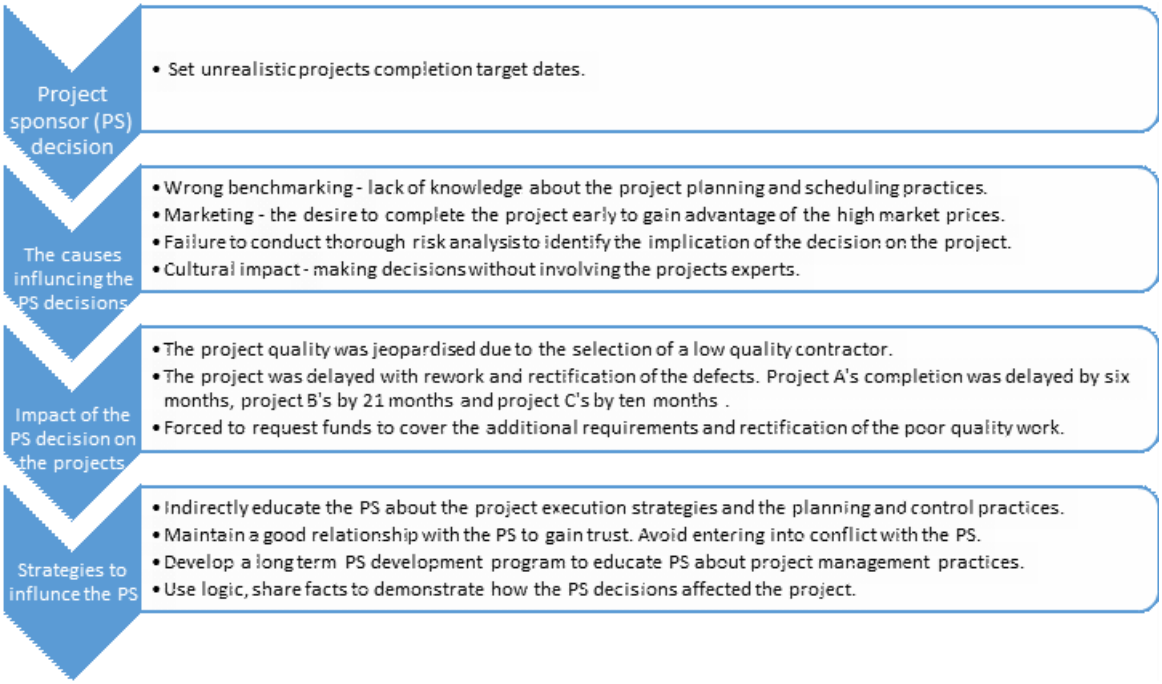

Figure 5.5: Summary of decision two factors, implications and strategies.

5.5 The Project Sponsor's Level of Support for the Projects

This section discusses the factors that influenced the project sponsor's level of support for the project team, their implications for the projects' success and the strategies the research participants and I can use to help the project sponsor support the success of the projects. The research found 17 key issues that influenced the project sponsor's level of support for the projects. Table 5.4 summarises these issues under three themes: communication management, human resources management and organisational culture.

Decision	Themes	Issues
The Project Sponsor's level of Support to the Projects	Human Resource Management	Delay in hiring Key projects resources (PM, Engineers).
		Appointment of a Project Team who lacked the technical expertise in such types of projects.
		Misunderstanding of the role of project manager and contracting.
		Did not recognise the importance of Operations involvement before finalising the project scope of work.
		Lack of clear roles and responsibilities among parties supporting the project.
		Limited interventions to facilitate support from other functions such as HR, finance, and procurement to the PMT.
		Failure to realise the importance of having enough offices to accommodate the project team & PMC in one place.
	Communication Management	Lack of communications, management decisions including the rationales are not communicated to the project team.
		Last minute Requests.
	Organizational Culture	Lack of cooperation between the project team and the support departments.
		Some project team members lack the technical experience.
		Did not practice what preach.
		At disagreement, did not strive toward reaching to a win to win solution.
		People from different parts of the organisation do not share common perspectives.
		Projects coordination is difficult across different parts of the organisation.
		Ignoring the internal customer's interests.
		Failures to learn from mistakes. Creativity, innovation and risk-taking are not encouraged.

Table 5.4: Summary of decision three themes and their associated issues.

The project sponsor's support is essential to project success. Sometimes, however, project managers do not get the support they need from the project sponsor (O'Brochta, 2010). The type of project organisational structure can influence how projects obtain support from the organisation (Davidovitch, 2010). Organisations can choose among various project organisational structures to determine how they want to manage projects. The PMI (2013) identified three project organisational structures organisations could employ to manage projects: the functional, matrix and projectise organisation. Each project structure has characteristics that specify the role and authority of the project manager and the availability of the resources. The selected project organisational structure can affect a project's success (Davidovitch, 2010). Therefore, before organisations select a project structure, they should be aware of the characteristics, benefits and limitations of each structure.

All three structures involve interactions and co-operation among various organisational department employees to manage projects. The level of involvement needed to support projects, however, differs from one structure to another. The functional project organisation has the highest level of involvement from other departments, while the projectise organisation has the lowest level of involvement (PMI, 2013). Therefore, regardless of which structure the organisation uses to manage projects, the project department will need to interact and work with other departments to manage projects effectively.

As discussed in chapter one, at my organisation, two departments are responsible for managing projects. The Project Development Department (PDD) is responsible for managing the development phases of the project, and the Projects Execution Department (PED) leads the project execution phases. The PED receives support services from the PDP and other organisational support departments, such as Finance, Procurement and HR. Figure 5.6 specifies the essential services each department provides to the projects. The research found that the relationship between the PED and the support departments was challenging.

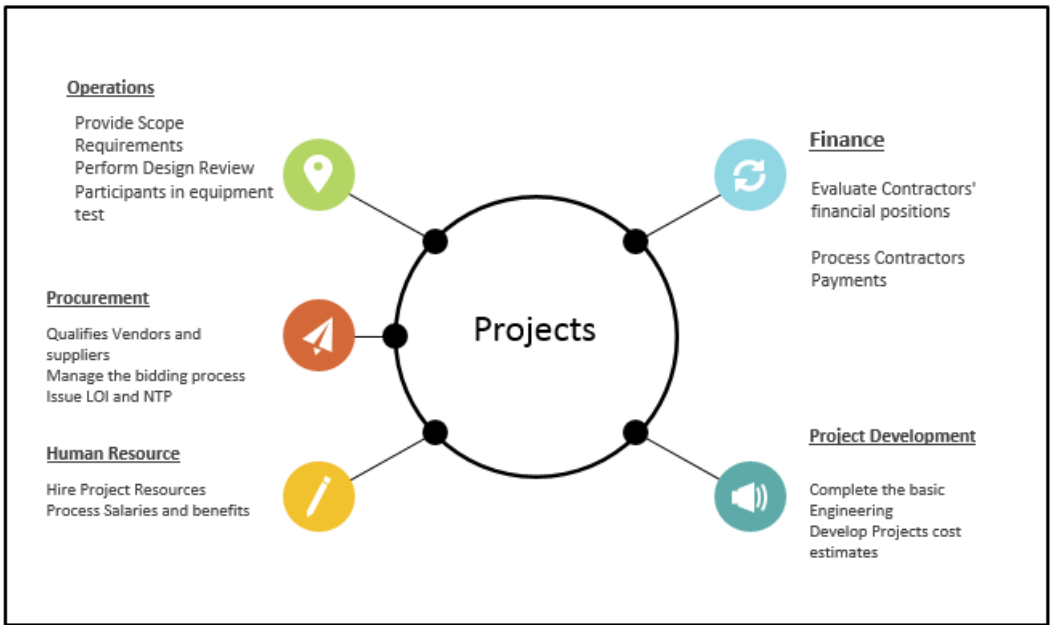

Figure 5.6: The essential services each support department provides to projects.

As discussed in section 5.2, the project sponsor directed the PED to expedite the execution of the projects. The support departments, however, did not have a sense of urgency to support the PED in fast-tracking the projects adequately. As a result, most services provided by the support departments were either not delivered or delayed. The delayed services affected the progress of the projects.

Project Engineering Manager A said:

> *"The lack of project management experience did not help them to realise the impact of making late decisions on project success".*

Project Director M said:

> *"The management was interfering in the management of the projects. They do not trust the project team, and there was delayed payment to contractors. If you do not trust your people, provide timely information and delay contractors' payments, then these issues will have major implications for the projects".*

These issues created tension between the support departments and the PED, which reached its peak when the project director complained to the project sponsor about the slow services provided by the support departments. Some participants thought there was a better way to encourage the support departments to co-operate than escalating the issue to the project sponsor. One team member argued that the support departments, over the past four years or so, had not supported any megaproject. It was unreasonable to expect them to change within six months. It is always difficult to change people's cultures (Hofstede, 1998). The project sponsor did not take a strong position on resolving the issues between the PED and the support departments. He was passive, so the support departments continued delaying their services.

External Project Manager T said:

> *"The role of the project sponsor is to support the project manager. It is preferred that he does not come from the project owner department to avoid a conflict of interest".*

In summary, the research found that the project team did not receive the necessary level of support to manage the projects successfully.

5.5.1 Factors that Influenced the Project Sponsor's Level of Support towards Projects

The research found two fundamental factors that influenced the project sponsor's level of support towards the projects. The first factor was the lack of clear roles and responsibilities in defining the responsibility and accountability of the project sponsor and project team.

Project Director A said:

> *"There must be governance that explains the roles and responsibilities of the project sponsor. Also, he must have the right authority to hire and fire as needed".*

External GM Project L said:

> *"Sometimes, project sponsors micromanage because of the lack of clear roles and responsibilities that define who should do what".*

Project Engineering Manager A said:

> *"The main objective of the assignment of the project sponsor is to support the project team".*

The debate about the role of the project sponsor is not new. Crawford et al. (2008) argued that the project sponsor should play either the governance role or the supporting role. The project situation should determine which of these two roles the project sponsor should play. While Kloppenborg et al. (2014) identified vital roles that the project sponsor should play in each project phase, Bryde (2008) argued that the primary objective from the assignment of the project sponsor is to support the project to success. Despite the scholars' and practitioners' debate over the role of the project sponsor, all agree that a vital role for the project sponsor is to provide the necessary support to the project team.

One external participant indicated that, recently, organisations in Saudi Arabia had begun to realise the importance of defining the roles and responsibilities of the project team. As such, each party supporting the project should know their roles in the project. They created what is called the Review, Approval, Consult, Information (RACI) document, a matrix that lists the project activities and project players. It specifies who will review, approve or consult for all of the project's important activities, as well as provides general project information. The RACI is a good tool that can help define the project team's roles and responsibilities. It must, though, also include the project sponsor so as to better define his role in the project.

The other factor that influenced the project sponsor's performance and the services provided by the support departments was the lack of a project management support culture or the impact of the organisational culture (Atkinson et al., 2006). The organisational culture influences how organisations manage projects (Hunt, 2000). It also affects how people interact and support each other to achieve the projects' goals (Henrie and Sousa-Poza, 2005). Cultures that do not support the implementation of project management best practices will affect the success of the projects (McGannon, 2002; Plessis and Hoole, 2006; Ong et al., 2009; Belassi et al., 2007).

Project Engineering Management A said:

> *"The project sponsor does not trust the capabilities of the project team. That is why he assigned a low-level authority to the project".*

External GM Project L said:

> *"Management determine the schedule of the project without the involvement of the project team. They consider one factor, the market, when determining projects' durations. Then when more information is available, they are surprised that their schedule cannot be met".*

If specific cultural traits exist in an organisation, they will influence the organisation's ability to manage projects. Ke and Wei (2007) have argued that the success of ERP implementation depends on organisational performance in five cultural dimensions: learning and development, participative decision-making, power-sharing, support and collaboration and tolerating risk and conflicts. Similarly, Nguyen and Watanabe (2017) identified five cultural factors that help in identifying the project cultures espoused in the construction industry: goal alignment and reliance, co-operative orientation, contractors' commitment, workers' orientation and empowerment orientation. Identifying the culture practised in the organisation thus helps the organisation understand people's behaviours and how cultures can influence a project's performance (Hunt, 2000).

Project Engineering Manager A said:

> *"The management says time is money, but their practice does not support what they are saying. They do not feel that time is money. They make late decisions and try to interfere with the project team's responsibilities and micromanage projects. Of course, such behaviour affects the progress of the projects".*

Project Director M said:

> *"The lack of a system to document and transfer the lessons learnt from one case to another affected the organisation's ability to learn from the experience of the previous projects".*

In an attempt to understand how the culture affects the project sponsor's performance and the services provided by the support departments, I used Denison et al.'s (2006) cultural model to diagnose and measure the effectiveness of the organisation's cultural profile. This model is a comprehensive tool that can help measure the culture of the organisation and its impact on the effectiveness of the organisation. I used this model because it is consistent with my research agenda. The model was developed by considering the cultural aspects that may influence the effectiveness of the organisation. The model determines the type of organisational culture by measuring the performance of the organisation under four cultural traits: involvement, consistency, adaptability and mission; each trait has three sub-dimensions to measure it. Table 5.5 lists the organisational cultural issues using Denison et al.'s (2006) cultural model.

Trait	Index	Issue
Involvement	Empowerment	Lack of trust. Does not trust the capabilities of the PMT (always critiques, no appreciation).
	Team Orientation	Lack of cooperation between the project team and the support departments.
	Capability Development	Some project team members lack the technical experience.
Consistency	Core Values	Does not practice what preach (example: time is money).
	Agreement	At disagreement, does not strive to reach to a win:win solution.
	Coordination and integration	Projects coordination is difficult across different parts of the organisation.
Adaptability	Creating Change	New ways to do a thing are not adapted. Attempts to create change usually meet with resistance.
	Customer Focus	Ignoring the internal customer's interests.
	Organisational Learning	Failure to learn from mistakes. Creativity, innovation and risk-taking are not encouraged.
Mission	Strategic direction and intent	There is no clear direction to give meaning to some of the management requests.
	Goals and Objectives	The management set goals that are unrealistic.
	Vision	The organisation's vision is not known to some employees.

Table 5.5: Organisational issues. (Adapted from: Denison et al., 2006.)

5.5.2 Implications of the Failure to Provide the Needed Support to the Project Team

The primary role of the project sponsor is to provide the necessary support to the project (Bryde, 2008). Without the appropriate level of support from the project sponsor, the project team may have difficulty achieving success (O'Brochta, 2010). The delayed support services had a substantial impact on the progress of the projects. The projects' records showed that the awarding of contracts was delayed; the recruitment of key project team resources and the progress payments to contractors were also delayed. Figure 5.7, for example, shows that the EPC contract for Project A was delayed by around four months and the plant equipment contract by five months.

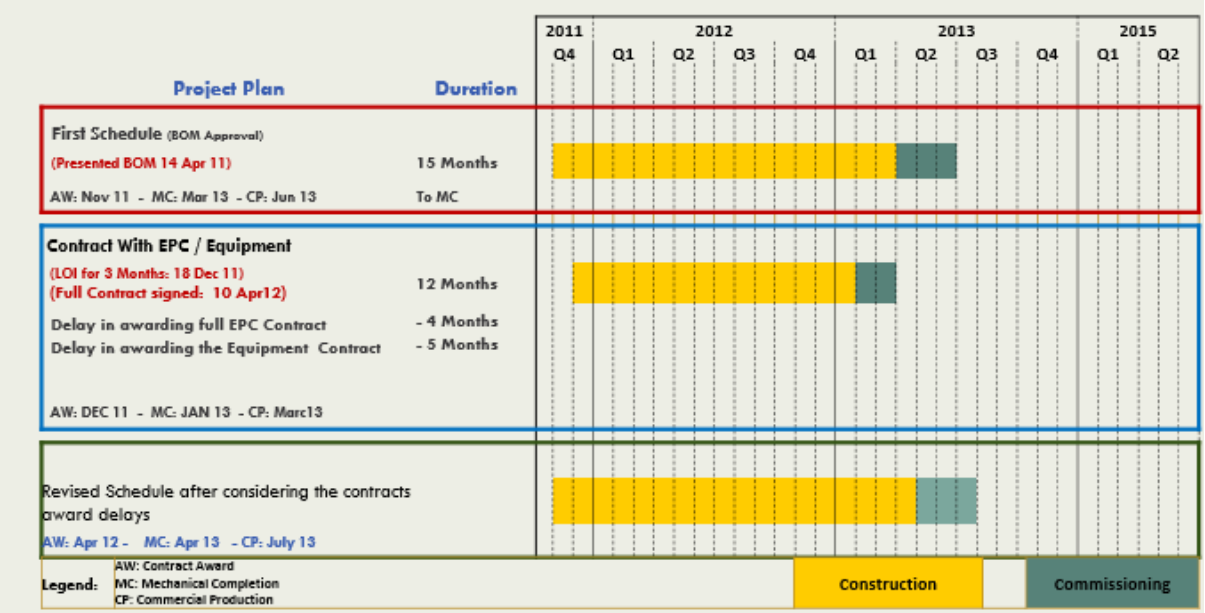

Figure 5.7: High-level project plan showing the delay in the award for EPC and equipment contracts. (Source: project records.)

Project Director M said:

> *"We were directed to expedite the execution of the projects. However, we were not receiving the proper support to help us progress the projects. We escalated the issues to management. However, the services were only marginally improved. How can we manage the projects without getting the necessary support?"*

The research found that the project sponsor was exercising control more than providing support to the project team.

Project Engineering Manager A said:

> *"The project sponsor's role is becoming an audit role rather than a support role. The project sponsor's main role is to support the project; the governance should not be the priority".*

The delayed services created a significant challenge for the projects. They affected the progress of the projects and contributed to the increase in tension between the PED and the support departments. Figure 5.8 summarises how the unclear roles and responsibilities and the absence of an organisational culture to support the implementation of project management affected the project sponsor's level of support to the projects.

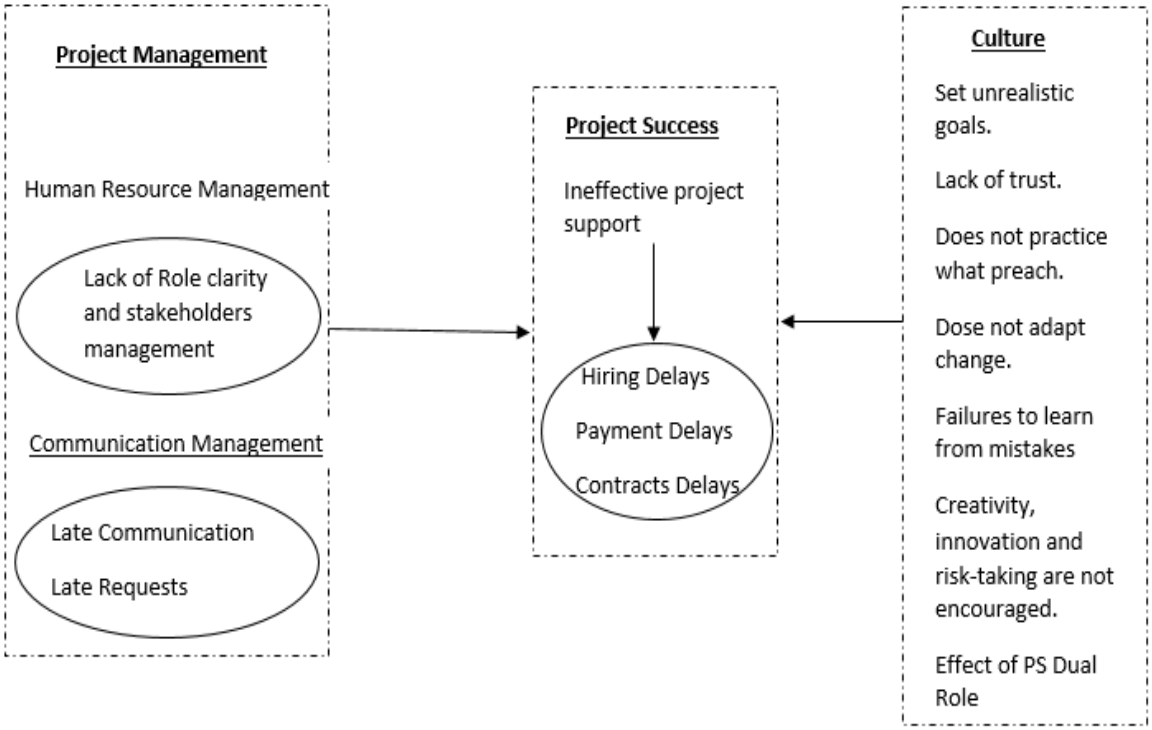

Figure 5.8: Effect of decision three factors on project success. (Adapted from: Carvalho et al., 2015.)

5.5.3 Strategies to Influence the Project Sponsor's Level of Support to the Projects

The research found a relationship between the organisation's cultural effectiveness and the maturity of the project management level in the organisation. Effective organisations develop a project management support culture to help projects succeed (Carvalho et al., 2015). The research recommended strategies that the research participants and I could implement to encourage the project sponsor to embrace a project support culture. It may not be simple, however, to influence one's own manager. Owen (2007) contended that one could not control one's manager; instead, one must figure out how to influence them.

For any influence strategy to work, the project team must first maintain a sound relationship with the project sponsor, one filled with respect, honesty and trust (Fu et al., 2004; Cohen and Bradford, 1989; Londono and Swain, 2015). If the project sponsor and support departments trust that the project team is knowledgeable and honest, their response and co-operation will be positive. Furthermore, the research found that the project team could not gain the project sponsor's trust if they could not adapt to or understand his management style.

External Project Manager T said:

> *"The project team should build a good relationship with the project sponsor and work closely with him to try to educate the sponsor about the project management practices indirectly".*

The expert panel advised the research participants, as much as possible, to avoid getting into conflict or taking actions that could lead to conflict with the support departments. They suggested finding common ground for building bridges and fostering a healthy working environment.

External EVP of Petrochemicals M said:

> *"It is imperative to allow the project sponsor to select his team, including the project director and the project manager. Often conflict occurs between the project sponsor and the project manager when the project sponsor is not given a chance to select his team".*

The research suggested that the project sponsor should not play a dual role in the project by supporting the project while also being responsible for the business department that owns the project. This dual role could lead to a conflict of interest.

Project Engineering Manager A said:

> *"To avoid a conflict of interest, the management should not assign a project sponsor who has a dual role: responsible for the project team and responsible for the department who owns the project".*

The organisation should establish a development programme to educate any potential project sponsors about the basics of project management (PMI, 2014). The project sponsor's selection and assignment to projects should then be based on a set of defined criteria (Helm and Remington, 2005).

External Project Manager T said:

> *"Some organisations do not have clear criteria when selecting sponsors. Normally, organisations assign a sponsor from the business department that owns the project".*

Project Director A said:

> *"The project sponsor should be assigned from the beginning and continue until the completion of the project. The only reason to change the PS is if he dies or resigns".*

Second, the research suggested that developing a procedure to define the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in supporting the projects would be beneficial. The participants recommended not focusing the actions on the project sponsor but instead looking at the bigger picture and extending the actions to include the support departments as well. Everybody in the organisation needs to understand that supporting projects is different from supporting normal organisational operations (Merrow, 2011). To achieve this target, the research suggested developing a project support protocol to define the responsibilities or services that the support departments should deliver for projects.

The third suggestion was to make the project sponsor accountable for the project's success or failure. The existing project organisational structure implies that the responsibility of the project's success lies with the project's team and not the project sponsor. The lack of this project sponsor's accountability for the project results affected his behaviour and decisions.

Project Manager S said:

> *"Because the project sponsor was not accountable for the success of the project, he did not care much about the impact of his decisions on the project success".*

Merrow (2011) warns organisations about the consequences of a lack of accountability from the project's leadership. He found that business functions within organisations are empowered to make essential decisions on behalf of the project, such as imposing unrealistic project completion dates and putting restrictions on project budgets, but mostly lack accountability in the case of project failures.

Project Engineering Manager A said:

> *"To resolve the issues of setting unrealistic dates or budgets, the project sponsor should be accountable for the success or failure of the project. If the project sponsor knows that he is accountable, he will carefully assign reasonable targets".*

The fourth recommended strategy is to assign a project engineer from the PED to the PDD to enhance the co-ordination and communication between the two departments. Interfaces in megaprojects are critical (Merrow, 2011). The co-ordinator can also play a role in educating the PDD about project management practices and promoting a supportive project culture.

To summarise, the project sponsor's support for projects is essential to the success of projects (O'Brochta, 2010). I used Denison et al.'s (2006) model to analyse and measure the cultural profile of the organisation to understand how culture affects the project sponsor's behaviours and actions. It is essential for the project sponsor to understand the effect of the culture on how projects are managed (Hunt, 2000). Figure 5.10 provides a summary of the third significant project sponsor decision, including the factors that affected the project sponsor's level of support to the projects, the implications of not providing the needed support to the project team and the strategies the project team can use to promote the project sponsor's awareness of the importance of fostering a project support culture in the organisation.

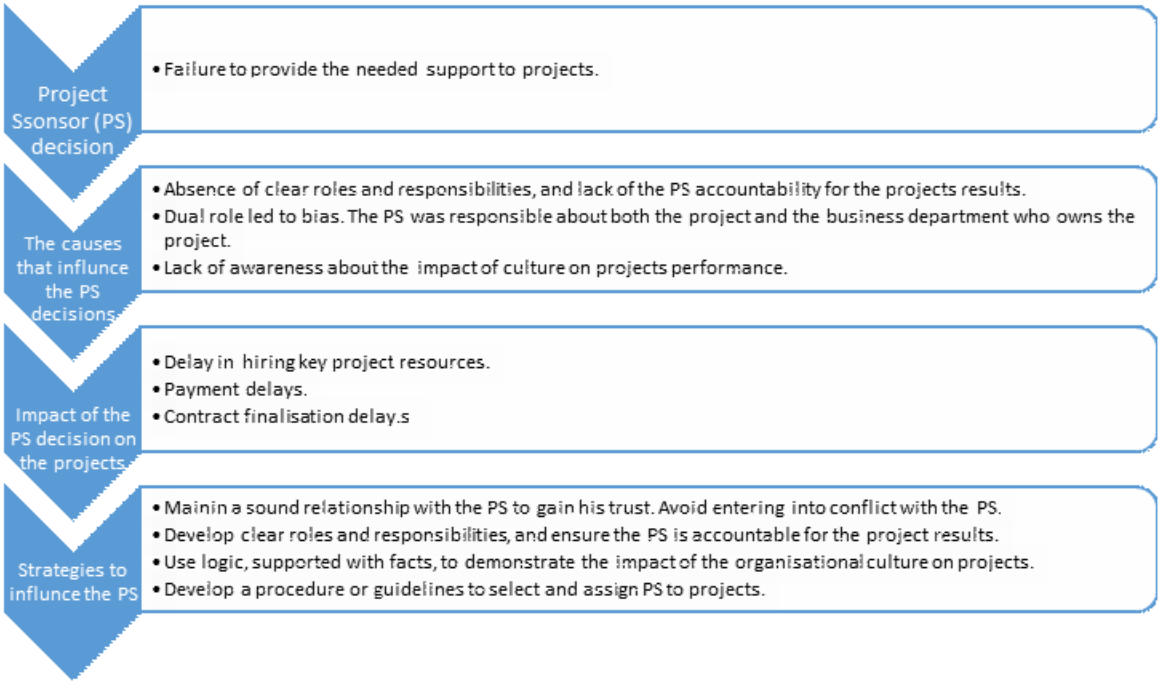

Figure 5.9: Summary of decision three effects on the project sponsor's support to the project.

5.6 Summary

Previous studies exploring project sponsorship have focused on defining the key project sponsor roles (Crawford et al., 2008; Kloppenborg et al., 2014), identifying the attributes and characteristics of the role (Helm and Remington, 2005), identifying the strategies for project sponsorship (O'Brochta, 2010; James et al., 2013) and determining the behaviours or decisions that project sponsors should avoid (Merrow, 2011). The findings of this research confirmed scholars' and practitioners' conclusions that the lack of project management knowledge and experience, the organisational culture and organisational politics are the primary factors that influence the project sponsors' overall performance (Denison et al., 2006; PMI, 2014; Carvalho et al., 2015). The literature did not, however, articulate how these factors influence the project sponsor's decisions or provide insight into how to ensure that project sponsors act in the interest of the success of projects. This research bridged this gap by demonstrating, with examples, how the lack of project management knowledge and experience and organisational culture affected the decisions of the project sponsor.

The research results indicated that for the project manager to influence the project sponsor's behaviours and decisions, he or she must use an appropriate strategy. The project manager, before attempting to introduce any changes in the project sponsor's behaviours or actions, first needs to build a good relationship with the project sponsor (Londono and Swain, 2015). This helps build trust and encourage the project sponsor to accept suggestions and recommendations.

The project sponsor and project manager are two critical leaders who can affect the success of projects (Kemp, 2004; Lewis, 2000). This fact has led organisations to introduce programmes to

develop and enhance project managers' project management skills (Verzuh, 1999). Unfortunately, however, project sponsors have not attracted similar attention (James et al., 2013). Assigning a project sponsor to a project is becoming common, but little effort is currently made by organisations to develop the project sponsor's project management skills (Londono and Swain, 2015). It is likely that the lack of project sponsor development leads, sometimes, to project sponsors making decisions that harm projects.

As a result, organisations must pay attention to the development of project sponsors, just as they are doing with project managers. In the effort to develop project sponsors, this research developed an actionable and successful project sponsorship framework, which is presented in chapter six.

6. Taking Action

6.1 Introduction

Action research is a scientific study whose aim is to resolve real organisational problems (Peddler, 2008). Indeed, implementing proper strategies to resolve problems is one of the essential features that distinguish action research from other social science research (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). The principal objective of this chapter is to describe the actions taken to influence the project sponsor's behaviours and decisions. The chapter explains the use of the action research cycle to plan and drive change in the organisation (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). This chapter describes the process used to develop the action plans, the actions taken to address the factors that influenced the project sponsor's decisions, their evaluation and the lessons learnt from the process. For each of the three significant project sponsor's decisions, I describe the strategies used to demonstrate to the project sponsor how his decisions affected the projects, the actions taken to influence the project sponsor's decisions and the evaluation of each action to reflect on the process of the actions and confirm that no further actions were required. Additionally, the chapter explains how the research participants could foster the conditions to help develop a project support culture in the organisation. Throughout the chapter, quotations from the research participants are used to share their perspectives and insights.

The outcomes of this research and the fact that few studies have explored the project sponsor's roles encouraged me to develop a framework for successful project sponsorship. The framework contributes to actionable knowledge. It guides the management team, the projects' sponsors and the projects' managers on how to develop project sponsors and adopt the organisational conditions that will eventually lead to the success of projects.

6.2 Planning the Action

In reality, it is not easy to influence people's behaviours and actions, especially those of one's own manager (Owen, 2007). I recognised the challenges I might face during the change implementation process. Therefore, it was necessary to develop a robust action plan (Kotter, 1996). As a change agent or facilitator, I solicited the research participants' support to drive the change. I agreed with the internal research participants to collectively meet monthly to assess the effectiveness of the actions, provide feedback and adjust the plan as needed. We adapted the action research cycle to guide the intervention process (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010). I emphasised to the research participants that we needed to be positive, be proactive, focus on what we can do and avoid irrelevant debates (Isaacs, 1993). I explained that it might not be possible to change the project sponsor's beliefs and

assumptions completely within a short period (Hofstede, 1998) and that, instead, we should focus our efforts on influencing some of the project sponsor's behaviours and decisions.

I adopted Kotter's (1996) model for leading the change and James et al.'s (2013) sponsorship influence strategies to help introduce effective changes. Kotter (1996) emphasised that, to have a successful transformation, one must develop a vision and communicate it to all stakeholders. Accordingly, I developed a broad vision to improve the way the organisation managed projects. Having a broad vision helped to reduce resistance to change and gain the support of stakeholders. I encouraged the team to stop finger-pointing and blaming, as they were destructive. I regularly reminded the research participants that failing to do so might threaten our ability to achieve the anticipated results. We needed to be positive and focus on what we could do to help improve the situation.

Three action cycles were planned, as depicted in Figure 6.1, to drive change. Each action cycle focused on one of the three significant project sponsor decisions.

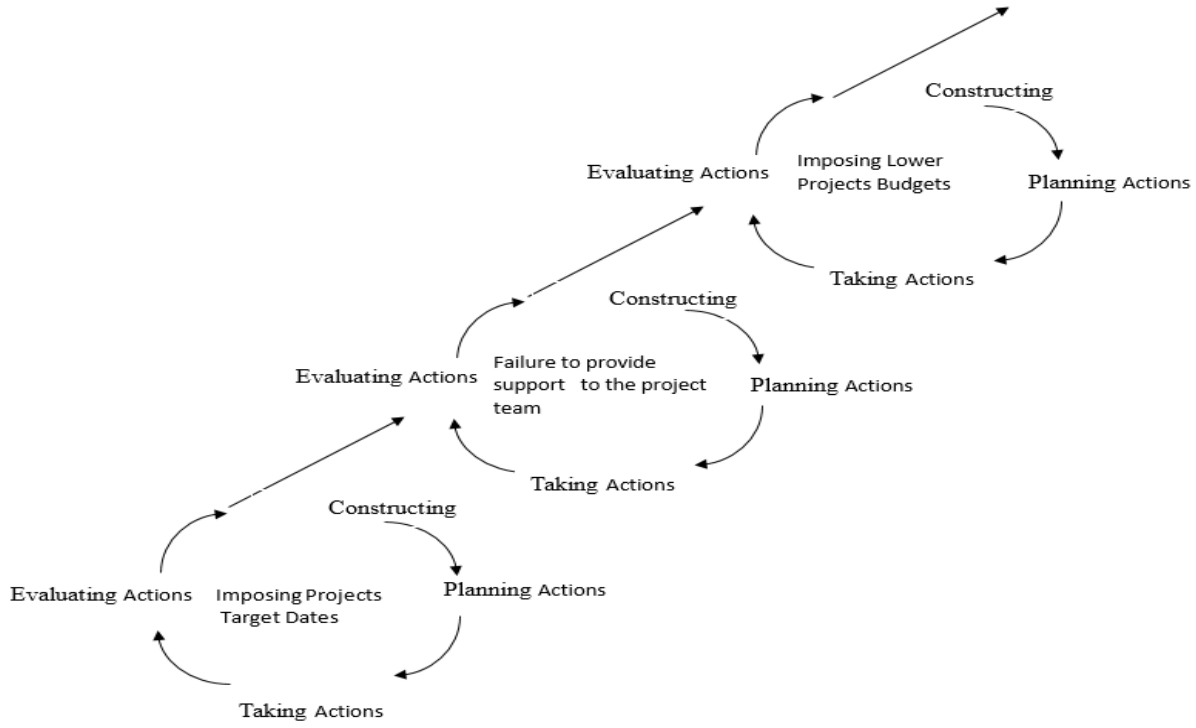

Figure 6.1: Action research cycle. (Adapted from Coghlan and Brannick, 2010.)

Tables 6.1 and 6.2 outline the suggested strategies and actions that could influence the project sponsor's behaviours and decisions. I classified these actions in two categories: affordable and unaffordable actions. The affordable actions, listed in Table 6.2, are the actions that could be taken by the research participants, and the unaffordable actions, listed in Table 6.1, are the actions beyond their control. The unaffordable actions provide strategic suggestions for improving the project

sponsorship process. The team agreed that these suggestions needed to be shared with the management team as part of an overall project management improvement initiative.

Serial	Issues	Proposed Actions
1	Lack of project management knowledge and experience	Establish a comprehensive project sponsor's development program (James et al., 2013; PMI, 2014).
2	Lack of the PS accountability about the results of the project	Project sponsors should be held accountable for the results of the projects (Merrow, 2011).
3	Discontinuity of the project sponsor	Changes in projects leadership will affect the progress of the project (Merrow, 2011). Therefore, do not change or replace the project sponsor unless they resign or dies.
4	The dual role led to bias. The PS was responsible for both the project and the business department who owns the project	1. Avoid assigning project sponsors from the project's owner department or division. 2. Develop a procedure to define clear criteria to select and assign projects sponsors (Helm and Remington, 2005).

Table 6.1: Unfordable actions, or actions beyond the team's control.

Serial	Issues	Actions
1	Making decisions without conducting a thorough risk analysis to identify and control risks.	1. Explain to the project sponsor in simple language the impact of not conducting risk analysis. 2. Use logic to share examples from experience or recent projects to demonstrate the impact of not conducting proper risk analysis and management (Fu et al., 2004).
2	Lack of knowledge about the project cost estimation practices.	Indirectly educate the project sponsor about the cost estimation best practices (Brown, 2011; Gloria et al., 2011). This can be done through: 1. Summarising journal articles and sharing with the project team and sponsor. 2. Regularly conducting short awareness sessions about the cost estimation practices with the team and inviting the sponsor to attend. 3. During progress meetings, share information about the process of cost estimations. 4. Invite contractors to explain the process they used to develop costs estimates.
3	Wrong benchmarking, lack of knowledge about the project planning and scheduling practices and the alternate projects execution strategies.	Indirectly educate the project sponsor about planning and scheduling best practices and different execution strategies (Al-Tabtabai, 2002; Yang, 2007). This can be done through: 1. Summarising journal articles and sharing with the project team and the sponsor. 2. Regularly conducting short awareness sessions about project planning and scheduling practices with the team and inviting the sponsor to attend. 3. During progress meetings, share information about the process of planning and scheduling. 4. Assign a project coordinator to the PDD department to promote a project support culture.

Serial	Issues	Actions
	The absence of clear roles and responsibilities that define the project sponsor's role.	Develop a procedure to define the roles and responsibilities of the project sponsor, the project team and the support departments (Kloppenborg et al., 2014).
	Lack of trust. Do not trust the capabilities of the PMT.	1. Acknowledge that cultural changes are not easy (Hofstede, 1998). 2. Be honest and build a solid relationship with the project sponsor (Londono and Swain, 2015). 3. Avoid conflict with the project sponsor.
	Making decisions without involving the project experts	1. Use logic to share examples from experience or recent projects to demonstrate the impact of not empowering the project experts to participate in making decisions related to their work (Denison et al., 2006). 2. Conduct workshops after completing each project phase to document the lessons learned.

Table 6.2: Affordable actions, or actions that can be taken by the team.

The identification and classification of the actions served as the initial step in developing the action plan. A compressive action plan was prepared to address all the project's issues, including those concerning the performance of the project sponsor. The plan lists the problems, their effects, the proposed actions and those responsible for taking them. A sample action plan can be found in Table 6.3. The plan was updated monthly to reflect the status of the actions. In each monthly meeting, each team member reported on the status of his actions and observations and whether further actions were needed.

Issue Description	Cause	Effect	Current Controls	Owner	Actions	Status
Extended procurement cycle.	□ Lack of full-time/on-site contracting department representative, especially during the early execution stage (contracting period). □ Procurement cycle outside the project process.	□ Time delay in executing the project. □ Possible cost impact due to schedule delay.	□ Recruited a full-time contract/procurement representative and secured enough empowerment to undertake the project contracting tasks.	VP. , Project □ Support	□ PMT to follow up with Recruitment Department. □ Secure enough empowerment to undertake the project contracting tasks. □ Share the impact of procurement delay.	Closed
Lack of timely input from Operations and PDD.	□ Lack of consultation and agreed roles and responsibilities matrix between Operations and PMT.	□ Extended commissioning and start-up period to operate satisfactorily. □ Cost of reworks to meet Operations' requirements.	□ Issued and adhered to agreed 'Project Operation Interface procedures. □ Operations concerns to be sought and addressed in study and execution phases through mandatory representation on	□ Director, Operations / Directorr, PED	□ Develop project support protocol and '"Project Operation Interface'". □ Assign a project coordinator.	Closed

Issue Description	Cause	Impact	Current Controls	Owner	Actions	Status
Issues related to the EPC contractor: Lack of supervision, insufficient resources, lack of project management.	• Lack of EPC management response.	• Construction Progress.	• PMT had to intervene to mobilise additional resources.	• PMT	• The issues were discussed with the EPC senior management, and official letter sent, progress payment held. None of these actions helped to improve the situation. Therefore, the PMT intervened and mobilised an additional 40 resources from a subcontractor to improve the progress.	Open
Delay in Commencement of ADR Contract	• NoA insufficiently detailed to allow the contractor to commence work.	• Delay to Project.	• Revise NoA wording to give sufficient incentive to commence the work resolve contract issues quickly.	• Contracting	• Follow up with contracting Department to enhance NoA language. • Provide awareness about the advanced procurement strategy.	Closed
Revised budget approval on due time	• Various inputs have been added to the original project budget assumptions. • Management should decide on these additions.	• The time delay in executing the project. • Possible cost Impact due to schedule delay.	• Arrange required inputs for Steering Committee to decide and arrange the meeting at the earliest.	• Project Sponsor/ PM	• Arrange required inputs for the decision and arrange SC meeting at the earliest. • Share best cost estimation. Practices.	Closed

Issue Description	Cause	Effect	Current Controls	Owner	Actions	Status
Contractor delay in receiving visas from labour office due to limited contract awarded.	Initial contract was for three months. The project could not sign the contract until the mining license was approved.	The time delay in executing the project. Possible cost impact due to schedule delay if the contractor raised a claim against this.	Contractor requested additional workforce/ extended shifts to recover.	Project Manager	Follow up with the contractor to recover the delay caused by this risk. Explain the impact of not signing full contact.	Closed
New regulations for Jeddah port.	The port prevented truck drivers who were not sponsored by the clearing agent to enter the port.	Delay to project.	Contact big agents to finish all the customs procedures.	Project Manager	Follow up with the port.	Closed
Poor conditions of the access road.	Site location and facilities.	Delay to project.	Followed up with access road contractor to complete the access road.	Project Manager	Follow up with the access road contractor.	Closed
Sand and windy weather.	Nature and location of the site.	Safety of workers. Delay to project.	Following safety procedures.	Project Manager	Follow safety procedures.	Open

Table 6.3: Sample action plan. (Source: project records.)

The next sections describe the actions taken to influence the project sponsor's beliefs about the determination of the project budgets and their end dates and the importance of providing the needed support to projects.

6.3 Action Cycle One: Determination of Project Budgets

As discussed in chapter five, the project sponsor directed the project team to keep the budget of Project A under USD $50 million to facilitate the approval of the project. The research found that the project sponsor's directive to lower the budget for the Project A was a mistake. This decision affected the duration and quality of the project (Brown, 2011; Lichtenberg, 2016). Organisations can specify how much money they are willing to spend on projects, but the best project management practices do not support random budget determinations (Kemp, 2004; PMI, 2013). The determination of a firm's megaproject budget should follow the correct cost estimation practices (Gloria et al., 2011).

While determining Project A's budget, I tried to identify a logical context to explain to the project sponsor the importance of allowing the engineering consultant to complete the cost estimates and the consequences of determining the project budget before completing the basic engineering. I could not articulate the connection between lowering the project budget and the effect on its success. Accordingly, the budget for the project as determined by the project sponsor was approved.

The effect of the project sponsor's decision emerged in the construction phase. The project team discovered quality defects and issues. The contractor began to delay the project activities. The project team planned for meetings with the contractor to discuss the quality and delay issues. Official letters were sent to the contractor's management to highlight the need to take action to recover the time lost and improve performance. The contractor, however, could not recover the delay nor improve the performance. As a project manager, I presented to the project sponsor the issues concerning the EPC contractor. I explained how accepting a low-priced contractor affected the progress and quality of the project. I supported my arguments with facts and examples from the project records (Fu et al., 2004). I acknowledged that the project team had made a mistake when he accepted this contractor based on the low-priced offer. I indicated that this was a big lesson for us. Careful consideration of awarding contracts to the lowest-priced bidder will be needed in future projects. I learnt that the selection of contractors should not be primarily price-driven (Hasmori et al., 2018). On that note, I suggested that the organisation develop multi-selection criteria to select contractors. The cost will be one of the criteria but not the only criterion. Other criteria should include things like after-sales support, accessibility of the contractor, the quality of the work and the guarantee period.

During the discussion with the project sponsor, I tried to avoid a direct link between the poor performance of the contractor and the project sponsor's decision to lower the project budget. I left it

to the project sponsor to make the connection. I used an indirect method to demonstrate to the project sponsor the effect of his decision to reduce his resistance to change and gain his trust and support (Owen, 2007). Indirect influence strategies can be powerful. They can help overcome organisational politics and influence executive behaviours and decisions (James et al., 2013).

Project Manager H said:

> *"After seeing the troubles the EPC contractor caused for Project A, the project sponsor definitely understood how putting limitations on the project budget can affect the success of the project".*

The discussion with the project sponsor and the steering committee members around the issues of Project A occurred before the budget was approved for Project B. This timing was deliberately selected while Project A's experience and challenges were still fresh in their minds. Project B was more critical than Project A; it was almost four times bigger. Therefore, it was vital to ensure that the lesson from the Project A experience was reflected in Project B.

Guided by the best cost estimation practices, the research participants suggested to the project sponsor that he allow the engineering consultant to carry out the cost estimates for Project B (Gloria et al., 2011; PMI, 2013). It was explained that, upon the submission of the cost estimates, the project team would review and validate them. If the estimates were found to be within industry standards, the cost estimates would be used to request the budget of the project. If, on the other hand, the cost estimates were too high, then the team would discuss optimisation with the consultant (Kemp, 2004). Eventually, the project sponsor agreed to let the engineering consultant develop the project cost estimations for Project B.

6.3.1 Evaluation of the Actions

The scheduled monthly meeting served as a forum for the team members to engage with each other and share their reflections and lessons. In the first action cycle, the research participants and I managed to persuade the project sponsor to let the engineering consultant carry out the cost estimate for Project B. We were successful because we framed our proposal positively and acknowledged the responsibility of the poor selection of the EPC contractor for Project A (Raelin, 2003). We helped the project sponsor better understand best cost estimation practices. We used logic, supported with facts from the experience of Project A, to articulate to the project sponsor the risks of requesting a low budget just to gain its approval (Fu et al., 2004).

Construction Manager J said:

> *"After getting into a lot of difficulties and challenges in Project A, the project sponsor realised how lowering the project budget could impact the performance of the contractor".*

Planning and Control Manager N said:

> *"The involvement of the project team in the review of the cost estimation for Projects B and C is an indication that the lessons from Project A were observed".*

The positive behaviour helped improve the team's relationship with the project sponsor and encouraged him to listen to the team's suggestions (Trevino, 1986; Londono & Swain, 2015).

Project Manager S said:

> *"We were successful in influencing the project sponsor to let the engineering consultant carry out the cost estimate because we were positive, we shared our view and we let the project sponsor decide".*

Probably the most significant gain from the actions of the first cycle was the introduction of cultural changes in the organisation (Denison et al., 2006). In Project C, the project sponsor did not interfere with the project cost estimation process. He allowed the engineering consultant to perform the cost estimate without imposing any restrictions. Therefore, we were successful in instigating cultural change in the organisation with regard to the use of the right method to determine a project's budget (Kotter, 1996).

6.4 Action Cycle Two: Determining a Project's Completion Dates

The setting of unrealistic project completion targets was a significant challenge for the research participants. In all the projects, the project sponsor set aggressive completion targets. The research found that the desire to meet the market needs was the prime reason that led the project sponsor to set unrealistic target dates. The project sponsor wanted these projects to be completed early to reap the benefits of the high product market price.

The engineering consultant for Project A determined that the project would need 18 months to complete. The project sponsor, however, did not agree with this duration; he thought the project could be completed more quickly. He directed the project team to fast-track the project and complete it within 12 months. It was explained that the 12 months might not be sufficient, considering the remote location of the project and the long lead-time of some of the plant equipment. I was not able to persuade the project sponsor to change his mind about the duration of the project. In addition, the

research participants and I met to discuss how we could complete the project within 12 months, considering all the given challenges.

We brainstormed various alternatives to fast-track the project activities. There were suggestions to prioritise the construction activities to advance all activities directly related to operating the plant. Another suggestion was to advance the procurement of the long-lead equipment (Al-Tabtabai, 2002; Yang, 2007). A third alternative was to engage another contractor to help with the construction activities. After the evaluation, the team determined that using the advance procurement strategy and prioritising the construction activities were the best ways to help expedite the construction activities.

We then began another action cycle. I explained to the project sponsor the advanced procurement process and the advantages the project would gain if we used this strategy. The research participants and I used an indirect strategy to educate the project sponsor about the best project management execution strategies. For example, we copied the project sponsor on the technical articles we emailed to the project team, presented topics related to project management to the team, invited the project sponsor to attend and conduct lessons-learnt workshops and shared the results with the project sponsor. I requested the project sponsor's approval for pre-funds to enable the advanced procurement to take place. Unfortunately, the project sponsor did not agree with using the advance procurement method, claiming that management would not approve any pre-funds if the project had not been officially approved.

When the development process for Projects B and C commenced, the project sponsor directed the project teams to fast-track these projects as well. He requested the completion of each project within 24 months. Experience indicates that similarly sized projects need 30–36 months to complete. Additionally, fast-tracking projects is not desirable, as speed kills projects (Merrow, 2011). The research participants and I were unable to persuade the project sponsor to allow for more time. Therefore, we focused on the actions that influenced the project sponsor's perception of the use of the advanced procurement method.

In Project A, I failed to convince the project sponsor to approve the advance procurement strategy. This time, however, the research participants and I used a practical approach to obtain actual information from the equipment's manufacturers. A small team visited some of the potential manufacturers' shops in Australia, South Africa and China to assess their manufacturing capabilities and understand the duration required to fabricate and deliver the equipment. The manufacturing durations suggested by the potential bidders were within the range of 12 months. After collecting all the information, the team shared the results with the project sponsor. The team explained that if we

followed the traditional way of managing projects (procuring equipment after completing the detailed engineering), we would not be able to meet the 24-month deadline specified by the project sponsor. The team suggested using the advance procurement strategy for all long-lead equipment.

The team demonstrated that the advance procurement strategy had been used successfully by many organisations. It helped expedite the delivery of the projects (Hammed, 2006; Merrow, 2011). We assured him that the risks could be mitigated. Advancing the procurement of long leads meant that management needed to approve the seed money before making the final investment decision. The most significant risk was related to losing the equipment cost if management did not approve the project. The team argued that the chances of cancelling the project were almost nil. The risk of losing a portion of the capital if the project was not approved could also be mitigated by stipulating clear terms and conditions in the contract giving the organisation the right to terminate the contract at any time without paying the supplier for the unfinished work.

Furthermore, the research participants sought to influence the project sponsor (Kotter, 1996) by harnessing the support of one of the steering committee members who was experienced in project management to persuade the project sponsor to approve the advance procurement strategy. In the end, the team succeeded in convincing the project sponsor to accept the advance equipment procurement strategy.

6.4.1 Evaluation of the Actions

The research participants and I could not convince the project sponsor to set realistic durations for Projects B and C. We explained that the proposed 24-month duration for each project was challenging because similarly sized projects usually take 30–36 months to complete.

Project Director A said:

> *"In Project C, the management directed us to complete the project within 24 months. When we benchmark the 24 months to similarly sized projects, we found the 24 months aggressive. Experience indicates that a similarly sized project will need 30–36 months to be completed".*

We did manage, however, to secure the approval of the alternate procurement strategy from the project sponsor. We were successful because we supported our request with real data from the equipment manufacturers and clearly explained how we planned to manage the risks (PMI, 2013). In Project A, I could not influence any of the project sponsor's decisions. For Projects B and C, however, the research participants and I were partially successful. We influenced the project sponsor's acceptance of the advance procurement strategy.

Project Director M said:

> *"Because we were proactive, we shared real data from the equipment manufacturers and we provided a good risk mitigation plan, we could convince the project sponsor to accept the advance procurement strategy".*

From this action cycle, I learnt that sometimes it is necessary to try more than one strategy to achieve one's objectives. If one strategy fails, another strategy might work. The most important thing is not to give up; one must always be positive and innovative. Sometimes the use of indirect methods to educate and influence management can yield excellent results (James et al., 2013). Another useful strategy that can help influence executives is building a coalition of or seeking support from influential leaders in the organisation (Kotter, 1996). The team learnt that if the project sponsor could not be persuaded to change his mind, then we should stop trying to convince him and focus on finding alternatives to meet the specified objectives.

6.5 Action Cycle Three: The Project Sponsor's Level of Support for the Projects

The project sponsor's support is essential to a project's success (Crawford et al., 2008; O'Brochta, 2010). The findings of the research indicated that the project sponsor did not provide the needed support to the projects. For example, the research learnt that the project sponsor could not help normalise the relationship between the project teams and the support departments and that the project sponsor sometimes interfered in the work of the project managers.

The lack of procedures or guidelines to define the roles and responsibilities was one factor that affected the project sponsors' level of support to projects. Procedures can reduce people's mistakes by up to 94% (Kemp, 2004). Hence, the first action the research participants and I took was to develop the project support protocol. The project support protocol is a document that specifies all the services the project team need from the support departments (human resources, procurement and finance) and defines their roles and responsibilities. The protocol was developed by the project team, reviewed by the support departments and then approved by the project sponsor. This action seems simple, but it took some effort to explain the objectives and the benefits of the project support protocol and have the support departments agree to sign the document.

Another action that helped reduce misunderstandings and tension between the support departments and the projects was the introduction of monthly meetings. It was agreed that both teams would meet monthly in the presence of the project sponsor to discuss the progress of the projects and agree on how to resolve issues.

A third action the research team took to help foster a project-support culture was the assignment of a project co-ordinator between the PED and PDD departments. The co-ordinator is a project engineer who was seconded from the PED to work with the PDD during the basic engineering phase. The role of the co-ordinator was to help the PDD understand the project management best practices.

In summary, three key actions were taken to help develop a project support culture: the development of the project support protocol, the introduction of monthly meetings and the assignment of a project co-ordinator to the PDD. These actions were the initial steps in enabling sustainable cultural changes in the organisation (Denison et al., 2006). The actions helped the project team and support departments gain a mutual understanding of the required services, alleviate tension and improve the morale of both teams. Consequently, the project sponsor had more time to focus his support on resolving key project issues. Continuous improvement, however, is required to develop a governance system to ensure that support departments deliver timely services and understand the strategic nature of projects and the ramifications of not providing the support needed to projects.

6.5.1 Evaluation of the Actions

The payback of the actions taken was quick. The services provided by the support departments improved. Their response to the project requests improved after developing the protocol. The research participants believed that developing the project support protocol was one of the essential actions undertaken. The protocol helped improve the relationship between the project team and the support departments because everybody knew their roles and responsibilities (Kloppenborg et al., 2014).

Project Manager H said:

> *"If you do not have the power to enforce your view on others, it is better to engage them to secure their support. When we engaged the support department to review the project protocol, we gained their support because they felt that they had participated in the development of the document".*

Another key advantage of the support protocol is the alleviation of conflict and debate between the projects teams and the support departments. After establishing the protocol, all departments started to pay attention to the projects' requests. The support protocol helped resolve the misperception about the assignment of the operation's representative to the projects. One critical issue for Project A's team was the late assignment of the Operations representative to the project. After the development of the protocol, however, the Operations representative for Project C was assigned during the development phase. Therefore, the research participants were able to enforce an effective change in the way the organisation structured its projects (Davidovitch, 2010).

Construction Manager J said:

> *"The appointment of the Operations representative during the early phases of the project was an excellent move. It helped reduce scope changes because all the requirements of operation and maintenance were included in the scope from the beginning of the project".*

Another improvement related to payments. Contractors began to receive their progress payments in line with the agreed schedule. The Human Resources department improved their rate of hiring.

The lessons from this case are many. The research participants and I learnt that socialising and building good relationships with others could help improve the provided services (Swain, 2015). In addition, when joining a new organisation, the first task is to understand its culture (Denison et al., 2006). One should avoid making or imposing quick or sudden changes. For a change to be effective, it should be gradual and well planned (Kotter, 1996).

The assignment of the project co-ordinator to the PDD was a great move in improving the communication and co-ordination between the PDD and the PED. It helped reduce the period after the completion of the basic engineering and awarding the EPC contract.

Project Director M said:

> *"The assignment of the project co-ordinator was helpful. He played a good role in educating the development department about the basic engineering deliverables".*

To summarise, most of the issues discussed in this research occurred in project A. Project A was the first project to be started, followed by projects B and C, respectively. However, there was overlap between the executions of these projects. During the implementations of projects B and C, there were new issues that emerged concerning the performance of the project sponsor. For example, in project C, the project sponsor did not trust the project team's validation of the project cost estimate prepared by the engineering consultant. He hired a third-party consultant to review the cost estimate. However, the third-party evaluation was no different than the team's evaluation. So, the company paid money to the third party but did not gain any additional benefits. Also, in project B, the project sponsor did not assign the operation representative during the project development phase to provide the operation and maintenance requirements. This delay of the operation representative's assignment had implications for the project's schedule. As in the execution phase, some requirements had to be added to the project scope. A third example is related to the project sponsor's reluctance to hire key project resources (a project manager and a project engineer) for project C. Although there were qualified candidates who could have been hired to fill in these positions, the project sponsor did not agree to offer competitive salary packages to attract them. This delay in hiring key project resources

had implications for the project's progress and increased the load on the existing resources. Project A's manager had to temporarily manage project C in addition to his responsibility to manage project A.

There were constraints that limited my ability to cover all the issues related to the project sponsor's decisions in this study. First, I was constrained by a certain timeframe to complete the research. As such, I was not able to research all the issues related to the project sponsor within the limited timeframe. The second constraint is related to the fact that some of the research participants either were transferred to manage other projects or resigned from the company. Therefore, it was difficult to engage new research participants in the study or contact those who had resigned. Therefore, I focused the study on exploring the three projects' sponsor's issues/decisions that had a significant impact on the success of the projects as identified by the research participants. Other issues with the project sponsor were considered as being outside the scope of this research.

6.6 Framework for a Successful Project Sponsorship

The project manager and project sponsor are key project leaders who significantly influence the success of projects (James et al., 2013). Scholars and practitioners have affirmed the importance of the project sponsor's role in enabling projects to succeed (Crawford et al., 2008; Bryde, 2008; James et al., 2013; Kloppenborg et al., 2014). Still, organisations focus on the development and enhancement of project management skills for project managers while paying little attention to the development of the project sponsors (James et al., 2013). For organisations to increase the success rate of their projects, along with developing project managers, they should also develop project sponsors.

The few studies that have explored project sponsorship have focused on defining the key project sponsor roles, identifying the attributes and characteristics of the role, exploring the strategies for project sponsorship and the behaviours that project sponsors should avoid. For example, Kloppenborg et al. (2006, 2009, 2011, 2012 and 2014) conducted five studies to define the key roles of project sponsor in each of the four project phases defined by the PMI (2013). Their work was limited to identifying the key roles in each phase to allow the project sponsor to manage his/her limited time to support projects effectively. Crawford et al. (2008), on the other hand, developed the situational project sponsorship model, which suggests that the project situation determines the role the project sponsor should play: either governance or support. In his research about megaproject strategies and practices for success, Merrow (2011) identified seven major mistakes that lead megaprojects to fail. He argued that project executives commit most of these mistakes and

recommended that project executives be aware of them so they can avoid them, but he did not discuss the development of project executives. Helm and Remington (2005) investigated the role of the project sponsor in a project. They identified nine attributes and behaviours organisations need to consider when selecting project sponsors. James et al. (2013) suggested strategies projects managers can use to work with different types of project sponsors. They advised the organisation to establish criteria for assign project sponsors to projects. They also briefly discussed the role of management and the project manager to train project sponsors. Their work, however, did not provide details about what management and project managers can do to contribute to the development of the sponsors of the projects.

It is clear, then, that the research objectives and agenda influenced all the above researchers. Hence, they either did not discuss the development of the project sponsor or touched on it only marginally, such as in the study by James et al. (2013). Assigning project sponsors is becoming increasingly common in organisations (Londono and Swain, 2015). Therefore, there is a need to advise the organisation on how to develop a successful project sponsorship.

In this section, I present an actionable successful project sponsorship framework. The objective of the framework is to help organisations prepare the organisational conditions to let the project sponsor act for the success of projects.

The framework represents a contribution to the limited body of knowledge concerning the project sponsor role (Helm and Remington, 2005; Crawford et al. 2008). The framework comprises three leading players: management, the project sponsor and the project manager (see Figure 6.2). Each player is required to take key actions to enable the development of a supportive project sponsor or foster the organisational conditions needed to help the project sponsor perform. Individual efforts from one or two players may contribute to the development of the project sponsor but if the objective is to enable the project sponsor to provide excellent support to projects, then collective involvement from all three players is required to co-operate and contribute to the development process. The next sections discuss the key actions the management, the project sponsor and the project manager need to make.

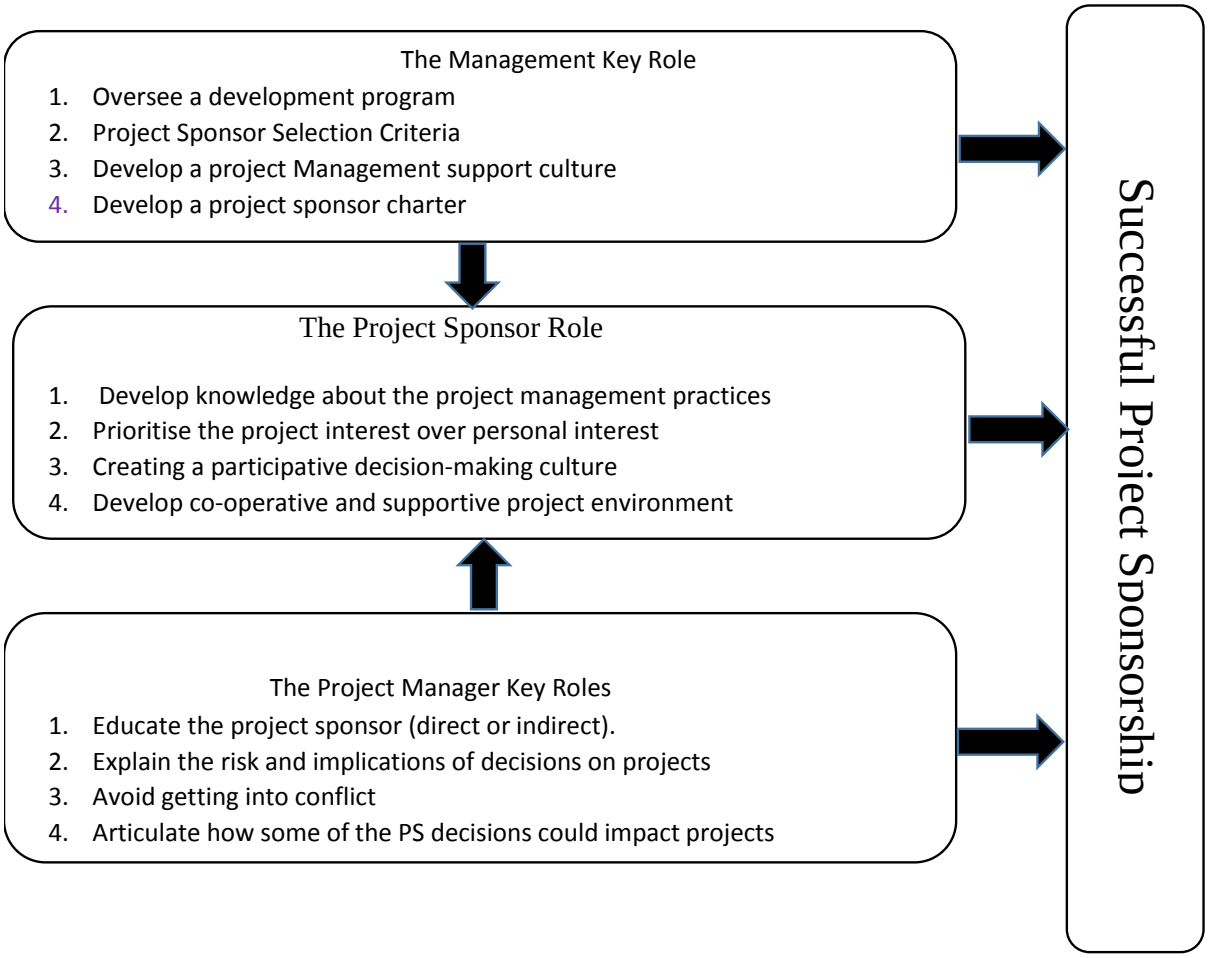

Figure 6.2: Framework for a successful sponsorship.

6.6.1 Management's Key Actions

Management has a vital role in enabling the development of the project sponsor. They have the power to introduce change in the organisation. Therefore, they need to realise the critical nature of their role in the development process rather than simply assuming that, just because project sponsors are executives, they do not need any project management development (James et al., 2013). Hence, the first step management must take is to change the belief and perception about the development of project sponsors. Project sponsors contribute to the failure of many projects (Merrow, 2011; Melymuka, 2004). In the three projects that form the cases for this study, we have seen how the decisions of the project sponsor impeded the success of the projects. Therefore, management must recognise the need to have experienced and knowledgeable project sponsors to guide the organisation's critical and strategic projects. Management not only needs to develop the project sponsor, but also foster the organisational conditions that support the project sponsor's performance (Morrison et al., 2008). The literature and the findings of this research suggest that management should take action in the following key areas.

6.6.1.1 Development of a Project Sponsor Charter

The charter should define the expected roles and responsibilities of the project sponsor. It should also specify the role the project sponsor needs to play in each project phase. The work of Kloppenborg et al. (2006, 2009, 2011, 2012 and 2014) provides a guide to organisations about these project roles by phase; see Table 6.4.

Project Phase	**Phase 1**	**Phase2**	**Phase 3**	**Phase 4**
Key Roles	Select and monitor the project manager	Ensure planning	Build a strong stakeholder relationship	Manage knowledge to ensure that all lessons learned from the project are captured
	Ensure that the project business case and the goals and objectives of the project are agreed to by stakeholders	Clarify output	Ensure quality	Demonstrate the benefits the project brings to the organisation
	Establish performance measures	Maintain stakeholders' relationships	Ensure effective communicati on	Ensure successful termination
	Define expectations	Appoint a project manager		

Table 6.4: The key project sponsor role in each project phase.

The charter shall emphasise that the project sponsor is responsible and accountable for the success or failure of the project. The findings of the research indicate that the lack of project sponsor accountability led him to make decisions without considering the implication of the decisions for the success of the projects. Therefore, project sponsors must be held accountable for the success or failure of projects (Merrow, 2011). In fact, the project sponsor should show leaderful (Raelin, 2003). He/she is responsible for his/her decisions and actions and accountable for the team's work. Accountability implies that management should provide the correct amount of authority to the project sponsor. He/she should have the right to hire or fire any project resource. Making the project

sponsor accountable for the whole project helps the project sponsor prioritise achieving the project interest over his/her personal interests (Brown, 2011).

In addition, the accountability of the project sponsor helps in resolving any issues associated with the project sponsor's dual roles. Role duality of a project sponsor occurs when management assigns a project sponsor to supervise projects executed for departments under his/her administration. In such a situation, the project sponsor is responsible for both the business and the project. The research has found the duality of the role of the project sponsor problematic because the project sponsor will always be biased towards the business team. Therefore, the organisation should avoid assigning two conflicting roles to a project sponsor.

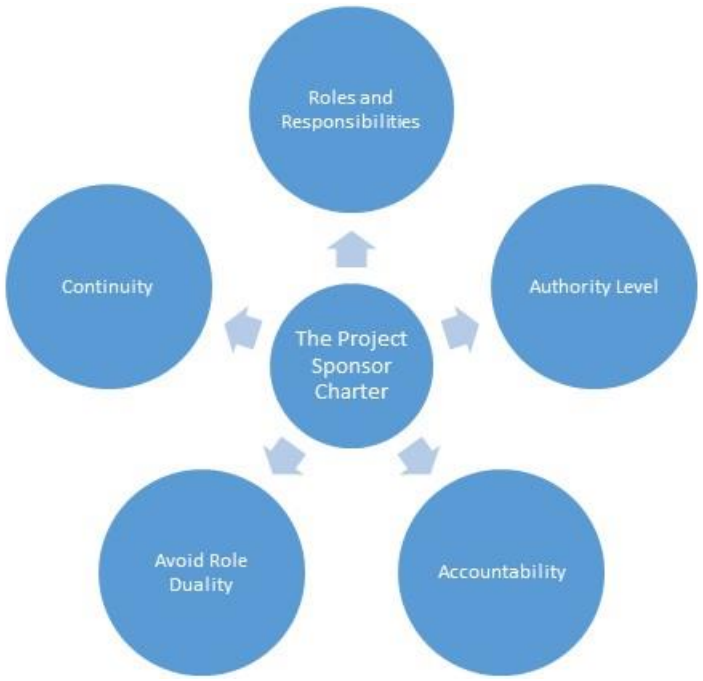

Figure 6.3: Project sponsor charter.

Finally, management should ensure the continuity of the project sponsor. The research results suggested that the project sponsor should continue with the project from the start to the end. He/she is only replaced if he dies or resigns from the company. The project sponsor's continuity is critical when the organisation does not have procedures to define his/her role and responsibilities. Replacing or changing project sponsors may introduce additional challenges to projects teams. Who must adapt to the different requirements and personalities of each project sponsor. So how can management guarantee the continuity of the project sponsor? The answer is simple: make the right selection. Management needs to ensure they select or assign the right sponsor to the right project

and provide incentives for exceptional performance. The next section discusses the project sponsor selection criteria.

6.6.1.2 Project Sponsor Selection Criteria

It is always vital to assign the right project sponsor to the right project (Melymuka, 2004). The project sponsor is a key project stakeholder who significantly influences the success of projects (Verzuh, 1999). Therefore, selecting and assigning the right sponsor to the right project should be a priority for management (James et al., 2013). The results of this research indicated that my organisation had no system or clear criteria for assigning project sponsors to projects. Project sponsors were assigned merely because they were executives and responsible for the department that owned the project. The research findings suggest that the assignment of project sponsors to projects relating to their departments led to conflict of interest among the project sponsor, project team and business team.

So, what criteria can organisations use to select and assign project sponsors? Does it depend on the project situation, as suggested by Crawford et al. (2008) in the project situational sponsorship model, or does it depend on the project sponsor's experience? For example, an organisation can assign the most experienced project sponsors to critical projects, or they can match the project sponsor's abilities with a project that has particular characteristics, such as its required delivery time, geography, customers, commercial, or project risk (James et al., 2013).

The above criteria are valid but not comprehensive enough to enable the selection of the right project sponsor. Thus, there is a need to have extensive criteria to help an organisation select the right project sponsor for the right project. I found that the criteria suggested by Helm and Remington (2005) provides an excellent start to establish a systematic process to select project sponsors. These criteria comprise nine points:

1. Appropriate seniority and power within the organisation.
2. Political knowledge of the organisation and political savvy.
3. Ability and willingness to make connections between the project and organisation.
4. Courage and willingness to battle with others in the organisation on behalf of the project.
5. Ability to motivate the team to deliver the vision and provide *ad hoc* support to the project team.
6. Willingness to partner with the project manager and project team.
7. Excellent communication skills.

8. Personal compatibility with other key players.
9. Ability and willingness to provide objectivity and challenge the project.

Helm and Remington's (2005) nine points cover leadership, management and organisational competencies and skills projects sponsors need to possess, but it does not cover project management competencies. The literature confirmed that applying project management techniques and practices helped increase the projects' success rate (PMI, 2014; Kloppenborg, 2007). So, all parties involved in managing projects must understand project management practices and techniques. The level of the knowledge varies depending on the individual's involvement in projects. For example, project sponsors need not be experts in knowing and applying project management techniques like project managers must. In addition, the research findings and previous studies confirmed that the most critical factor that influenced the project sponsor's decisions was the lack of project management knowledge and experience (Homer, 2008; Merrow, 2011; James et al., 2013; PMI, 2014; Carvalho et al., 2015). As a result, basic knowledge about project management should be among the criteria for selecting and assigning project sponsors.

Another criterion that needs consideration while selecting projects sponsors is an avoidance of the duality of the role. The role duality in a matrix project organisation occurs when organisations assign a project sponsor to guide his/her own department's projects. As a human being, it is natural for a project sponsor to support his/her own permanent organisational employees (O'Brochta, 2010). It is not ethical, however, to show bias towards one's subordinates if they are mistaken. As a leader, the project sponsor must be fair to all parties involved in managing projects. The research findings suggest that, in a matrix project, if the project sponsor is not accountable for the success of the project and is assigned to guide projects related to his department, conflict of interest will emerge. If a conflict occurs between the project team and the project owner's department team, the project sponsor will be biased toward his/her department team.

Megaprojects are complex and surrounded by many uncertainties (Merrow, 2011). Hence, an organisation must be proactive in addressing issues, in particular issues related to the owner's team, such as conflict, miscommunication or ambiguity in the roles and responsibilities that may influence the execution of projects. If not managed, conflict may affect the relationship and trust between the project sponsor and project manager (Walker, 2012; Ke and Wei, 2007). If this relationship breaks down, the project suffers. Therefore, organisations must avoid taking actions that may foster conflict in the project, such as assigning a project sponsor with a dual role. In a matrix project organisation, the departments' executives should not be assigned as project sponsors guiding their departments' projects.

6.6.1.3 Project Management Development Programme

The research confirmed that applying project management practices would help facilitate projects' success (Kloppenborg, 2007; PMI, 2014). Organisations who realised this fact took actions to enable the use of best project management practices. They established matrix and projectise project organisations and developed procedures and systems to manage projects effectively. They recognised that having qualified projects staff helps improve the project's success rate. Hence, they invested in the development of project professionals, especially project managers, to enhance their project management competencies and skills. Many project sponsors, however, have little project management knowledge and experience (Crawford et al., 2008). The projects sponsors' lack of project management knowledge could be attributed to management's perceptions about the project sponsor role (James et al., 2013). Some management believe that projects sponsors are executives and therefore do not need to have any project management experience or are, as James et al. (2013, p. 150) put it: 'Too cool to be trained'. In addition, they may assume that project sponsors will never take any actions or make any decisions that influence the projects' success (Melymuka, 2004).

The research findings indicated that it is hard for project sponsors to admit to making mistakes. James et al. (2013) argued that arrogance prevents project sponsors from accepting that they sometimes make mistakes. Such a project sponsor's belief and mind-set limits his/her ability to learn. The project sponsor's ignorance about the project management practices affects his ability to make decisions or realise the implications of his/her decisions for a project's success. If project sponsors are critical to enabling project success, they must be developed to understand basic project management practices and techniques. Given that project sponsors are executives and may not have the interest or time to attend a classroom training (James et al., 2013), how can they be developed? The first step in the development process is for management to realise the benefits the organisation gains from enhancing project sponsors' project management skills. Without the management's support and enforcement, the development programme may not materialise.

The project management programme should enhance the project sponsor in the key project management knowledge areas (PMI, 2013). Emphasis should be placed on scope management, time management, cost management, risk management and procurement management.

Other areas, such as human resources management and communication management, are not included because, as an executive, the project sponsor should already have leadership and management skills. The development programme should include awareness of the lessons learnt

from previous projects. If it does not already exist, organisations should develop a system to document all lessons learnt from previous projects. The research found that project sponsors repeat mistakes because they are not aware of the lessons learnt from past projects. Additionally, the programme should include topics like the roles and responsibilities of the project sponsor and the relationship of the project sponsor to the project stakeholders, especially the project manager. Furthermore, as the research results recommended, it is important to articulate how a project sponsor's decisions affect the success of projects.

In summary, the project management programme can include development in the following topics:

- Project planning and scheduling techniques
- Cost estimating and budgeting
- Project scope and change management
- Project procurement, including contracting types
- Risk management and decision-making
- Project sponsor roles, responsibilities and authority
- The relationship of the project sponsor with the project stakeholders
- Awareness of the lesson learnt from past projects
- Bad behaviours that project sponsors should avoid
- The effect of some of the project sponsors' decisions on the success of projects

Management should decide on the appropriate method to deliver the development programme. The critical point is to ensure all executives go through this programme and undertake refresher awareness sessions before any project sponsor assignment. Emphasis must be placed on sharing lessons learnt from previous projects.

6.6.1.4 Development of a Project Management Support Culture

The organisational culture is related to the organisation employees' routines, practices, beliefs and assumptions they use in performing their jobs (Hofstede, 1980; Schein, 1995). The organisational culture is important because it affects how projects are managed and given support in the organisation (Stare, 2011). Scholars and practitioners have affirmed the influence of the organisational culture on the performance of projects (Plessis and Hoole, 2006; Belassi et al., 2007; Ong et al., 2009; Pereverzev, 2011). The research findings showed how the organisational culture affected the services delivered to the project teams. Projects need a culture that appreciates time,

empowers employees to make decisions related to their work, has a rational decision-making process, respect and trusts the capabilities of the employees and maintains open communication (Ong et al., 2009). Morrison et al. (2008) summarises the important organisational conditions for effective project management in 12 dimensions: organisational direction, competitiveness orientation, decision-making rationale, cross-functional integration, communication philosophy, locus of decision-making, people management style, flexibility, philosophy about people, personal competency, process and systems support and performance management.

It is the responsibility of management to prepare the organisational conditions for effective project management (Whitten, 1999). Cultural changes are difficult (Hofstede, 1980). Hence, management should avoid sudden cultural changes. If the management wants project sponsors to support project success, they must foster a project support culture in the organisation (Smith, 2003). Without having a project support culture, the project sponsor may have difficulties playing his/her role, impeding his/her performance.

6.6.2 The Project Manager's Key Roles

The project manager is a key project stakeholder who can play a vital role in the development process for the project sponsor. The project manager is the individual with the authority to lead the project to completion. While the project sponsor is an executive who is responsible for providing the resources to the project (Kloppenborg, 2007), the relationship between the project sponsor and project manager should be based on partnership principles. While the project sponsor advises the project manager about the organisational culture, policies and procedures and how to manage the stakeholders, the project manager should educate the project sponsor about project management practices, tools and techniques (Walker, 2012). The project manager must understand the type of project sponsor the project has (O'Brochta, 2010). This is critical, as different strategies work with various project sponsor styles. The research indicates that it takes time to understand the project sponsor's project management maturity level.

James et al. (2013) developed strategies to help the project manager work with different types of project sponsors. Once the project manager identifies the type of project sponsor he/she is dealing with, he/she can choose suitable strategies. Regardless of which strategies the project manager uses to work with the project sponsor, however, he/she needs first to build a good relationship with the project sponsor, a relationship based on respect and trust, to be able to influence his/her behaviour and decisions (Londono and Swain, 2015).

If project managers want to sell project management to project sponsors successfully, they need to relate project management outcomes to executives' higher-level business strategy concerns,

articulate to the sponsors the effect of their actions on the success of projects and demonstrate the long-term benefits of project management (Thomas et al., 2002). The research found that the project sponsors lacked even a basic understanding of project management practices and techniques. It was also difficult for the project sponsor to realise the effect of his decisions on the success of projects. Initially, it was difficult to influence the project sponsor because of the lack of trust between him and the project manager. Once the two parties had started to get to know each other better, however, they began to build a good relationship that created an environment in which the project sponsor could listen to some of the project manager's suggestions and ideas. Therefore, creating a good relationship, being honest and gaining trust are keys that enable project managers to helping the project sponsor be receptive to suggestions or recommendations.

The project sponsor can use direct or indirect methods to sell project management to the project sponsor (James et al., 2013). He/she needs to use facts and examples to demonstrate to the project sponsor the impact of his/her decisions on the success of projects. In this research, indirect methods were used to educate the project sponsor. For example, in the case of Project A, the project team could not influence the project sponsor's decision to accept the advance procurement of the long-lead equipment. In Project C, however, the situation was different. The project team visited the manufacturers' shops and obtained the delivery times of the equipment, then explained to the project sponsor with supporting facts that the project required the procurement of the equipment in advance of completing the detailed engineering; otherwise, the project would be delayed. The project sponsor could see the facts and understood the effect his decision would have, so he authorised the project team to proceed with the advance procurement of the long-lead equipment.

To summarise, the project manager must extend his/her influence bound the boundaries of the project to the project sponsor (O'Brochta, 2010). For this to occur, the project manager needs first to identify the project sponsor type, then employ the appropriate influence strategy. Sometimes, the project manager needs to try different strategies or use multiple strategies at the same time to reach the desired results. Figure 6.4 summarises the key project manager's actions in the development of the project sponsor.

Figure 6.4: The project manager's key actions.

6.6.3 The Project Sponsor's Role

The primary role of the project sponsor is to support projects (Verzuh, 1999). The project sponsor must understand his/her role and responsibilities in supporting projects effectively. What actions should the project sponsor make to enable successful project sponsorship? Is it enough to play key roles at each project phase (Kloppenborg et al., 2014), or should the sponsor's role depend on the project situation (Crawford et al., 2008)? The research findings suggested that simply playing key roles or situational roles is not enough to enable the project sponsor to provide adequate support to projects. For example, in the three projects, the sponsor set unrealistic expectations for the projects' completion dates. He also justified limiting the budget for Project A to the benchmark made to the old project. Benchmarking is an acceptable cost estimation practice, but it has to be done right (Kemp, 2004). Therefore, it does not matter whether the project sponsor plays key roles or situational roles; what matters is for the project sponsor to play an informed role. This means that, before taking action or making any decision, he/she must understand project management practices and techniques and realise the effect of his decisions on the success of projects. Without these two conditions, the project sponsor may unknowingly make decisions that lead projects to failure (Melymuka, 2004).

Furthermore, the research results indicated that the project sponsor should play a role in developing a project support culture. Scholars and practitioners consider having a supportive project culture as a key project success factor (Smith, 2003; Denison et al., 2006; Pereverzev, 2011). The project

sponsor failed to support the project team in getting the required support from the organisation's departments. He did not trust the capabilities of the team or empower them to make decisions related to their work. For example, in Project C, the project sponsor did not trust the project team's validation of the project cost estimate prepared by the engineering consultant. He hired a third-party consultant to review the cost estimate, but this evaluation did not differ from the team's evaluation; the company paid money to the third party but gained no additional benefit. Therefore, without adopting a project support culture, project teams will continue having difficulties managing projects.

In addition, the research found that politics influences the project sponsor's performance. Here politics means giving priority to personal interest over the project's interest. O'Brochta (2010) argued that politics is a leading source of conflict in projects. It causes scope creep and shifts the focus of the project goals. Politics lead the project sponsor to make decisions selfishly. The research found politics to be a factor that led the project sponsor to request that the project team lower the budget for Project A. The project sponsor had a personal milestone of approving the project by a certain date. By lowering the project budget, he ensured that the management would approve the project. Lowering the project budget was later proven to be a poor decision because the project had to request more money to complete the project. Therefore, the project sponsor should always prioritise the interest of the project over his/her personal interest.

Finally, knowledge about project management practices is vital for all resources involved in projects (PMI, 2013). The level of project management knowledge varies by the involvement of each individual in the project. A project sponsor responsible for supporting projects should understand the basics of project management practices (James et al., 2013). The literature finds that the lack of awareness about project management practices is a major factor that influences the project sponsor's performance (O'Brochta, 2010; Merrow, 2011; PMI, 2014).

In the case of Project A, the project lost around four months of schedule float because the project sponsor was not aware of the advance procurement strategy of long-lead equipment. He did not want to take a risk, so he did not approve it. The project sponsor should not only depend on management or the project manager to educate him/her about project management techniques and practices, but he/she should also be proactive and lead his/ her development. The project sponsor's role should complement the management role. For example, if the management has not developed a charter, the project sponsor should develop one and obtain management approval. If the roles and responsibilities are not defined, the sponsor should play a role in developing clear roles and responsibilities for the parties' involvement in managing projects. Figure 6.5 summarises the project sponsor's key actions.

Figure 6.5: The project sponsor's key actions.

6.7 Summary

This action research project was a challenging journey for me, as it was not easy to influence my manager (Owen, 2007). The literature provided practical strategies that enabled the research participants to plan and implement effective change (O'Brochta, 2010; Merrow, 2011; James et al., 2013; Kloppenborg et al., 2014).

In three action cycles, the research team and I were able to take actions that influenced some of the project sponsor's beliefs and assumptions about the determination of a project's budget, the use of alternative procurement strategies and the role of the project sponsor. The research participants, however, were unable to influence the project sponsor's perception of how to determine project completion dates. Further studies are required to explore how to influence the project sponsor's perspective on the determination of project completion targets.

The research contributed to the actionable knowledge by developing a successful project sponsorship framework to guide organisations in developing project sponsors.

7. Reflection and Learning

7.1 Introduction

Reflection and learning distinguish action research from other research approaches (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010). This chapter explains how my learning as a scholar-practitioner evolved throughout the research process. I describe how the literature informed my research and led me to finalise the research questions and develop a successful project sponsorship framework. In this chapter, I reflect on my essential learning during the research process. I classify this reflection into three key areas. The first area was what I learnt about the project sponsor's role, why the project sponsor should not make critical project decisions without involving experts, how management and the project manager can influence the project sponsor's decisions, the criteria organisations should use to select and assign project sponsors and how to develop a project support culture.

The second area concerns what I learnt about action research, the efficacy of the action research to address project management topics, how action research can promote a learning organisation and the differences and similarities between action research and project management. The third area focuses on how I developed and grew as a scholar-practitioner, the implications of the research results on my professional role in the organisation and the lessons obtained about how to address the dual role and understand organisational politics.

7.2 Learning about the Project Sponsor's Role

Throughout the research process, I learnt new insights about the project sponsorship process (Crawford et al., 2008; Kloppenborg et al., 2014) and how to employ appropriate strategies to influence a manager (Owen, 2004). I realised the power of collaborating with the research participants to plan and implement effective organisational changes (Kotter, 1996). After the appointment of the new CEO, the organisation developed an ambitious strategy to grow and become a biller in the Saudi Arabian economy. Projects were one of the strategic enablers of the new strategy. Recognising the importance of completing projects on time, management assigned a project sponsor to support the implementation of projects.

The role and responsibilities of the project sponsor remained undefined, however. It was left to the project sponsor to figure out how he wanted to undertake the role. Such ambiguity in the roles did not help the projects. Rather, it created confusion and chaos among the project leadership. Instead of supporting the projects, the project sponsor contributed to their delay. Melymuka (2004) argued that sometimes project sponsors contribute to project failures without knowing that they are doing so.

The research results suggested that the project sponsor was playing the governance role more than the support role. This behaviour of the project sponsor did not align with perspectives of the researchers, who see the project sponsor role as being supportive and not governance (Kempt, 2004; O'Brochta, 2010; Kloppenborg et al., 2014). Even the situational project sponsorship model does not encourage the project sponsor to play the governance role more than the support one (Crawford et al., 2008). The model specifies that the project situation determines which role the project sponsor needs to play. The research affirmed that the primary role of the project sponsor is to act for the success of projects. Therefore, projects sponsors should not make critical project decisions, such as deciding on the budget of the project or project completion dates, without involving the project experts (Merrow, 2011).

The research found many factors influencing the project sponsor's level of support to projects. Some were related to the project sponsor, such as his lack of project management experience, and some were related to the organisation, such as the lack of a system to assign sponsors or the organisational culture. I learnt that my organisation selects project sponsors based on only two criteria: seniority in the organisation and relationship to the department that owns the project. The research outcomes demonstrated that these two selection criteria are not enough. Organisations should consider other criteria for selecting project sponsors, such as leadership skills, project management knowledge and the criticality of the project (James et al., 2013; Crawford et al., 2008; Helm and Remington, 2005). Chapter 6 provides a list of criteria that guide organisations to select project sponsors.

The study informed me that the project sponsor was not learning from his mistakes or that he was repeating decisions that harm projects because of his lack of project management experience and knowledge. In addition, in the absence of a system to document lessons learnt from previous projects, it was difficult for the project sponsor to understand the effect of his decisions on the success of projects. Therefore, the project manager needs to play a vital role in educating the project sponsor about project management practices.

The research found that confrontations and debate with the project sponsor were the main factors affecting the relationship between the project teams and the sponsor. The actions taken in this study had implications for the research participants' relationship with the project sponsor and the support departments. Before the study, the relationship with the project sponsor and the support departments was poor: there was conflict, tension and little trust. This unhealthy environment affected the morale of all parties because they could not work together as a cohesive team. The tension had implications for the services and support provided to projects. The organisational culture did affect, then, the ability of the organisation to manage projects (Denison et al., 2006; Plessis and Hoole, 2006; Belassi et al., 2007; Ong et al., 2009; Pereverzev, 2011).

The actions taken in this study helped improve the relationships and restore trust among the research participants, the project sponsor and the support departments. The research participants and I learnt that we could not suddenly change the culture of the organisation. Cultural changes are difficult, and require patience and the use of appropriate strategies to be effective (Hofstede, 1980). Before taking any actions, it is important first to determine the type of project sponsor in order to use the suitable influence strategy (James et al., 2013). In the absence of a project procedure to guide the execution of projects, and given the lack of the project sponsor's project management experience, it was difficult to influence the project sponsor's beliefs and assumptions about how to manage projects.

The research revealed that the best strategy to influence the project sponsor is to be honest, respect cultural differences and build a healthy relationship with the project sponsor (Londono and Swain, 2015). In addition, the project manager needs to be proactive and have leadership qualities, be responsible for your work and be accountable for the overall team performance (Raelin, 2003). For example, the research participants persuaded the project sponsor to accept the advance procurement strategy when they were proactive and supported their argument with facts about the actual equipment delivery dates (Fu et al., 2004). Therefore, if the project sponsor's knowledge about project management practices and techniques is limited, it is important to articulate to a project sponsor how his/her decisions affect projects (O'Brochta, 2010).

One valuable lesson from this study relates to the continuity of the project sponsor. As one of the research participants said, 'organisations should only change project sponsors if they resign or die'. The continuity of the project sponsor becomes more critical if the organisation does not have clear roles and responsibilities. The lack of clear roles and responsibility leads each sponsor to implement his/her own way of managing things. The project team must then adapt to the new sponsor's style each time the sponsor is changed. Eventually, the project will suffer.

For a project sponsor to perform his/her primary role and support projects, he/she needs to be developed. Scholars and practitioners have explored the project sponsor's roles. They studied the attributes and characteristics of the role, the sponsor's key roles in each project phase and the behaviours the project sponsor should demonstrate or avoid, but there was little knowledge about how to develop the project sponsor's project management skills (James et al., 2013; Merrow, 2011; Crawford et al., 2008; Helm and Remington, 2005). This research contributes to the professional knowledge concerning the role of the project sponsor by suggesting a successful project sponsorship framework that provides actionable knowledge to guide organisations on how to develop project sponsors and foster the organisational conditions needed for successful project sponsorship.

7.3 Learning about Action Research

The action research approach is a familiar one among education and health researchers (Chivonne, 2014). In addition, it has been used effectively to study project management topics (Parker & Mobey, 2004; Hartmann et al., 2008). The qualitative action research approach helped me examine the project sponsor's roles and make sense of his behaviours and actions. I was able to co-operate with the research participants to explore the project sponsor's roles, understand what drove the project sponsor's actions and interpret and make sense of his behaviour and decisions. The action research cycles enhanced my problem-solving skills, enabling me to analyse and evaluate issues objectively and plan and lead effective change in the organisation (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010).

Throughout my career, I have worked with focus groups or problem-solving teams to investigate organisational issues. We have been able to identify problems and recommend relevant solutions. Most of my teams, however, have relied on the experience of the group members to speculate about and provide solutions to problems. When I learnt and used the action research approach, I found it better than most traditional problem-solving strategies, such as a focus group, quality circle or problem-solving team. Action research not only uses the team members' experience to suggest solutions, but also provides them with the opportunity to review the literature and learn from others' insights and experiences. The literature review was critical because it helped the team understand and define the problem better and examine the suggested solutions. Moreover, it helped me understand what other researchers know about the project sponsor's roles and the areas that need further research and exploration.

I learnt that researchers have studied the key roles of project sponsor in each project phase, the behaviours the project sponsor should embrace or avoid and the attributes and characteristics of the project sponsor (Helm and Remington 2005; Merrow, 2011; Crawford et al., 2008; James et al., 2013; Kloppenborg et al., 2014). The literature informed me that the project sponsor could contribute to the success or failure of projects (Merrow, 2011; Melymuka, 2004). There was no demonstration, however, of how the project sponsor's decisions could lead projects to fail. Assigning a project sponsor to a project has become popular in organisations, but there are no programmes to develop project sponsors' skills and competencies in project management practices (Londono and Swain, 2015). The literature review guided the research to finalise the research questions.

Another essential feature of action research is the reflection or learning (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). The conventional problem-solving techniques usually stop at identifying the problem and recommending a solution. Several times I was part of a focus group studying an organisational problem. The team's role ended after offering recommendations to the relevant department. After

some time, we found the same problem resurfacing and did not know what the underlying issue was. After investigation, we discovered that the issue was in the implementation process. Either the recommendations were not implemented at all, or they were implemented incorrectly. This issue was resolved with the action research approach. Action research is not only concerned with identifying issues and recommending solutions; it also focuses on implementing strategies and learning from the whole process (Pedler, 2008). Gibbs (1988) argues that it is not enough to learn by reading or thinking (classroom learning); you also need to learn by practising (on-the-job learning). For the learning to be effective, reflecting on the experience is needed; otherwise, the learning is lost. Reflection is the process of thinking and questioning without taking for granted assumptions and beliefs (Johnson and Duberley, 2000). As discussed in chapter six, the research participants and I took actions that influenced some of the project sponsor's beliefs about how to manage projects. After each project phase, the research participants and I were keen to document the lessons learnt to capitalise on the effective behaviours and identify areas for improvement. In addition, I used research journals to document my learning and reflections.

The action research approach and project management are similar in many ways (Takey and Carvalho, 2015). Both are problem-solving techniques that can be used to resolve complex organisational issues. They are both dynamic processes that support learning and reflection. The process of action research encourages the researcher to think carefully before taking any actions. Careful planning enables researchers to identify and consider the risks before taking action (Kotter, 1996). The authentication process will improve the quality of the actions taken.

On the other hand, there are some differences between the action research and project management approaches. Project management is hierarchical, and its outcome focuses on approach; it stresses the planning, organising and controlling of the project activities, while action research is a participative approach that encourages teamwork and collective learning (Whitehead, 2005; Coghlan and Brannick, 2010). Project management also has unique characteristics that differentiate it from other approaches (Be and Be, 1997, cited in Whitehead, 2005). In project management, activities have specific objectives, the project activities are related to each other, each activity has a defined start and end and each project is unique. Finally, both project management and action research have phases, but in project management the phases comprise more processes than does action research (PMI, 2013).

7.4 Learning and Developing as a Scholar-Practitioner

I joined the organisation in 2009 as a project manager. I had had previous project management experience managing different types of projects. I came from a pure project management culture that valued using best practices to manage projects. When I joined the organisation, I learnt that there was

a substantial cultural difference between my previous organisation and the new organisation. At that time, the organisation was managing three projects, each of which had historical issues. These challenges piqued my interest in exploring how I could co-operate with the research participants to overcome them.

Throughout the research process, I developed and enhanced my research skills to identify, analyse and define the problem. I did not take things for granted; instead, I inquired about and questioned everything. Questioning and inquiry facilitated understanding, making sense of social reality, provided a learning opportunity and enhanced my knowledge and leadership skills. The literature review, inquiry and questioning processes helped me not only define the problem but also identify the root causes that led to it, finalise the research questions and select my research methodology (Hassard, 1991).

As a scholar-practitioner, I played the facilitator's role during the action research process. I explained the action research approach to the participants, co-ordinated meetings, developed action plans, drew conclusions and summarised and presented my findings. All these activities enhanced my management and leadership skills. Undertaking the facilitator's role helped me understand the organisational politics and how to overcome them (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010). The literature review informed me that the research participants and I were mistaken when we tried to introduce change without developing a clear change implementation plan for it (Kotter, 1996). I learnt that changing people's beliefs is difficult but not impossible (Hofstede, 1993). To influence others, one must use an appropriate influencing strategy (James et al., 2013). At times, different strategies must be tried to achieve success. The most important thing is to be positive, gain the trust of those you are trying to influence, use logic and support arguments with facts (Londono & Swain, 2015).

I understood that my research topic was not easy because it explored the role of the project executive, the project sponsor. By choosing to study the project sponsor's roles, I wanted to make a difference and add value to the overall process of managing projects in the organisation. I became interested in carrying out this study when I found that few studies had examined project sponsorship or the effect of the project sponsor on the success of projects (Crawford et al., 2008).

I learnt that writing the research thesis report was an entirely different experience from conducting the action research project. In conducting the research, I had to understand the organisational politics, the dual role and pre-understanding (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). My dual role as an insider researcher and an organisational employee responsible for managing one of the projects was challenging. I had simultaneously to manage both the operational project and the research project. Wearing two hats or switching between roles was not easy. The biggest difficulty I had was to overcome my pre-

understanding and prejudgement about the project sponsor's performance. To overcome these factors, I avoided making assumptions if there was no evidence to support them (Coghlan, 2008). I also requested that research participants provide examples to support their perspectives.

Another difficulty I faced was overcoming organisational politics. This research explores the project sponsor's performance in projects. The research participants and I had difficulties working with the support departments and the project sponsor because of organisational culture differences. Hence, it was not easy to inform the project sponsor directly that his decisions had contributed to project failures. The research findings helped me identify the right strategy to overcome this situation. I used the indirect method, as advised by James et al. (2013) to demonstrate to the project sponsor the importance of using the best project management practices and articulate how some of his decisions had affected the project; the issues caused by the project sponsor were not presented separately. The issues were presented as part of the overall project issues. This strategy helped me reduce the resistance to change because it helped the project sponsor understand that the primary goal was not to focus on his mistakes but to find solutions to the project's delay issues.

I overcame some of the organisational politics by being flexible and trying to manage the political relationship in order to influence decisions. I was keen to promote credibility and thereby gain trust (Bjorkman & Sundgren, 2005). I learnt that I needed to question everything, analyse and make connections between events to draw a clear picture of the situation. The literature review informed me about the strategies for overcoming the tension between the research participants and the support departments (Kempt, 2004; Londono & Swain, 2015; Walker, 2012). For example, the development of the project support protocol enabled me to overcome some of the organisational politics with the support departments. In addition, building a coalition or requesting assistance from other executives helped to influence the project sponsor's behaviours (Kotter, 1996).

As a professional manager, I learnt not to make judgments if they were not supported by evidence. I also learnt that sometimes one must use an indirect method to overcome organisational politics. Procedures will help clarify roles and responsibilities and reduce tension and conflict (Kempt, 2004). One factor that encouraged the project sponsor to make decisions affecting the projects was the lack of project sponsor accountability with respect to the success or failure of the projects. The research found that the project sponsor made decisions but that they were not properly documented. I learnt that documenting projects' decisions should be emphasised because documentation will hold the project sponsor accountable for the results of his/her decisions. Because each individual views situations from one's own perspectives, before deciding to introduce changes one must understand how the project sponsor thinks and what affects his behaviours (O'Brochta, 2010). I learnt that to influence the project sponsor's behaviours one must build a good relationship with the sponsor by

being positive, honest and respectful. Then the direct or indirect strategy can be employed to influence the sponsor's behaviours (James et al., 2013).

This research contributed to actionable knowledge by developing the successful project sponsorship framework to develop project sponsors. I enjoyed this research journey and became interested in attending conferences and seminaries to further enhance my knowledge of project sponsorship. I plan to publish parts of this research in journals and magazines.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

8.1 Introduction

This action research was undertaken to explore the effect of a project sponsor's decisions on the project's success. The objective was to influence the behaviour and decisions of the project sponsor and promote a project support culture within the organisation. The qualitative action research approach was used to explore the effect of the project sponsor's decisions in the context of three megaprojects. This chapter elaborates on the overall conclusions of the action research. It provides a summary of the key findings, the implications of the project sponsor's decisions on the projects and the root causes that led the project sponsor to make the three significant decisions, as well as how the research results were used to influence the project sponsor's behaviour and decisions and promote a project support culture. The chapter then discusses the limitations of the research and provides recommendations for future studies. Finally, the chapter provides recommendations to management, project sponsors and project managers on how to ensure successful project sponsorship and recommendations to scholars and practitioners interested in carrying out DBA studies.

8.2 Key Research Findings

The study aimed to answer three research questions:

- What are the implications of the project sponsor's decisions on the success of the projects?
- What are the factors that influenced the project sponsor's decisions?
- What are the strategies the project team can use to influence the decisions of the project sponsor?

The study managed to answer all these questions.

This research used an action research approach to solicit the perceptions and insights of 13 research participants about the effect of the project sponsor's decisions on the success of three megaprojects (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). The research results indicated that the project sponsor had made decisions that affected the performance of the projects.

8.2.1 Implications of the Project Sponsor's Decisions for the Success of the Projects

The research found that three project sponsors' decisions had significant implications for the projects' cost, schedule and quality. These decisions were: directing the project team to lower the budget for Project A to facilitate selling the project to management, setting unrealistic project completion dates and failing to provide the needed support to the project teams. The implications of these decisions

varied among the three projects, where Project A, as the first project to be executed, suffered the most. At completion, all projects had been delayed: Project A by six months, Projects B by 21 months and Project C by ten months. Project A incurred additional costs, experienced quality issues and encountered legal claims from the contractor. These findings confirmed that project sponsors could contribute to the failure of projects (O'Brochta, 2010; Melymuka, 2004).

8.2.2 Factors Influencing the Project Sponsor's Decisions

The research found that three key issues influenced the decisions of the project sponsor: his lack of project management experience, especially in the areas of cost, time, procurement and risk management, the organisational culture and the desire of the project sponsor to achieve personal objectives. These issues affected the project sponsor's decision-making ability and hindered him from realising the consequences that his decisions may have on the projects' success. The research determined three root causes of these issues.

8.2.3 First Root Cause: Lack of Essential Skills and Knowledge

The first root cause was the lack of a project sponsor development and selection programme to educate the project sponsor about project management practices and assign the right sponsor to the right project (PMI, 2014). A project sponsor does not need to be an expert in all project management areas, but he/she must understand basic project management practices and techniques (James et al., 2013)

A project sponsor development programme should cover the essential skills and knowledge that the project sponsor must master to undertake his/her role effectively. The programme should use multiple methods, such as formal training, seminars, participation in workshops or sharing useful articles from literature or books, to develop the project sponsor.

Moreover, assigning project sponsors should be a gradual process. Initially, potential sponsors can be assigned as steering committee members. Then, after gaining knowledge and experience, they can be assigned to sponsor non-critical projects (Crawford et al., 2008). Organisations must also be careful when assigning project sponsors from the same division that owns the project (Merrow, 2011). The research suggests that the project sponsor should not play a dual role: that is, supporting the project as well as having responsibility for the business department that owns the project. The dual role could lead to a conflict of interest. The selection and assignment of project sponsors should be based on defined criteria. The following management and leadership criteria can guide organisations to select and assign project sponsors to projects (Helm and Remington, 2005):

- Appropriate seniority and power within the organisation.

- Political knowledge of the organisation and politically perception.
- The ability and willingness to make connections between the project and organisation.
- The courage and willingness to battle with others in the organisation on behalf of the project.
- The ability to motivate the team to deliver the vision and provide *ad hoc* support to the project team.
- The willingness to collaborate with the project manager and project team.
- Excellent communication skills.
- Personally compatibility with other key players.
- The ability and willingness to provide objectivity and challenge the project.

In summary, the project sponsor should know the essential practices of project management, have excellent management and leadership skills and refrain from playing a dual role in the project. Furthermore, the continuity of the project sponsor is vital to project success. Experience indicates that projects are affected if there is a change in the project's leadership (Merrow, 2011). Therefore, organisations, if they assign a project sponsor to a project, should not change them until the project has been completed. Project sponsors should only be changed or replaced in limited cases, such as if the project sponsor resigns or dies.

8.2.4 Second Root Cause: Lack of Clear Roles and Responsibilities

The second root cause is the lack of clear roles and responsibilities for the project sponsor. The research found that the project sponsor was not held accountable for the failure of the projects; accountability was for the project team only. Thus, the lack of accountability lets the project sponsor make decisions without considering the implications they may have on the projects (Merrow, 2011). If the project sponsor is accountable for the project's success or failure, he/she will be more careful before making decisions or directing the project team. If he/she is accountable, he/she will know if things go wrong. He/she will be responsible for the failure before the project team. An accountable project sponsor consults, encourages open communication and dialogue, listens to others' views and suggestions, conducts thorough risk management processes, strives to enhance his project management knowledge and makes informed decisions.

8.2.5 Third Root Cause: Influence of the Organisational Culture

The third root cause is the influence of the organisational culture (Denison et al., 2006). The results of the cultural analysis indicated that the organisational culture does not support the implementation of

project management. In our case studies, the organisational culture led the project sponsor to make vital decisions, such as determining the project budget and duration, without the involvement of the experts. The lack of trust in the abilities of the project team led the project sponsor to interfere with the responsibilities of the project manager. The research suggested that the project sponsor should create a culture that empowers and engages the project team in making decisions related to their work (Ke & Wei, 2007). The project sponsor should share and communicate relevant information promptly (Barker & Gower, 2010), avoid criticism, establish trust and sound relationships among the organisation's departments (Londono & Swain, 2015), manage conflict effectively (Walker, 2012) and encourage change and innovative solutions (Kotter, 1996).

8.2.6 Strategies the Project Team can Use to Influence the Decisions of the Project Sponsor

The research found that the project team did not understand the culture of the organisation. Thus, rather than fighting the support departments, the project team should have looked for ways to gain their support (Greengard, 2007). The project team tried to make quick changes in how the organisation managed projects. The project team's intervention was not useful because they used ineffective influencing strategies that led to conflicts and tension between the projects and support departments. The research found that cultural changes are not easy (Hofstede, 1998). For the change to be effective, it must follow a clear change management plan (Kotter, 1996). The project team was mistaken to try to change the culture without fully understanding the organisational cultural profile or identifying the best influencing strategy (Denison et al., 2006: O'Brochta, 2010).

The research found strategies the project team could use to influence the decisions of the project sponsor and articulate the ramifications of some of his decisions for the success of the projects. The first step was for the project team to build healthy relationship with the project sponsor filled with honesty, respect and trust (Londono & Swain, 2015). Once trust is established, the project sponsor will more likely listen to the project team's suggestions and observations (Dass & Parker, 1999). The project team needs not only to educate the project sponsor about the project management practices but also how to sell project management techniques to the project sponsor (Greengard, 2007).

In three action cycles, the research participants and I managed to challenge some of the project sponsor's beliefs and assumptions around the determination of the projects' budgets, the use of alternate procurement strategies and the role of the project sponsor. The research team was unable, however, to change the project sponsor's perception of the determination of project completion dates.

8.3 Limitations of the Study

The research achieved its objectives. There were, however, some limitations and challenges.

8.3.1 Possible Bias of the Research Team

One limitation is the possible bias of the research team, as the voice of the project sponsor was not heard. It was not practical to involve the project sponsor in the study, as the study's objective was to explore the effect of the project sponsor on the success of projects. To overcome this challenge, I engaged external participants in the study. Some external participants undertook a project sponsor's role in their organisations. The involvement of the external participants helped provide a more objective view and new insights and increased the credibility of the research results (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). The external participants explained that they were experiencing similar issues with their project sponsors. They added that most of the issues concerning the project sponsor were related to his desire to lower the project budget and set unrealistic project completion dates. These similarities in the issues concerning the project sponsor role in Saudi Arabian organisations suggests that the outcome of this research can be transferred to other organisations. Each firm, however, should carefully determine how to implement the findings, given their unique organisational culture and structure.

8.3.2 Relatively Small Sample Size

Another limitation concerns the relatively small sample size. In this study, I used a sample of 13 project professionals. Of the 13 participants, seven were internal participants and six were external participants. I could not add more internal participants as I had a limited number of professionals who met the sample selection criteria. Because this was a specific study, I included only professionals holding managerial positions and with extensive project management experience. For the external participants, I solicited 25 professionals to participate in the study. Only six, however, agreed to participate.

8.3.3 Limitation of the Research Scope

Another limitation was related to the research scope. The study focused on exploring the effect of the project sponsor's decisions on the success of projects. The study investigated only the three project sponsors' decisions that had a significant impact on the success of projects. Ideally, the study would have also covered all the decisions of the project sponsor and the other factors affecting the success of the projects. Due to the time constraints, however, the study was limited to exploring the project sponsors' decisions that had a significant effect on the success of the projects.

8.4 Future Study

By taking into consideration the importance of the project sponsor's role and the few studies that have thus far explored the topic, more studies are required to uncover all aspects of project sponsorship. Organisations have recognised the essential role projects sponsors play in enabling the success of projects. They have paid little attention, however, to the development of project sponsors (James et al., 2013; PMI, 2014). This research suggested a successful project sponsorship framework to guide organisations in developing successful projects sponsors. Further quantitative studies, however, could be conducted to test, enhance the framework and determine the relative influence of each party, management, project sponsor and project manager on the success of the project sponsorship.

Moreover, the research results identified the lack of project management knowledge and experience, the influence of the organisational culture and the desire of the project sponsor to achieve his personal interests as significant issues that affected the decisions of the project sponsor. The research also raises other questions that need to be investigated, such as what other behaviours and decisions project sponsors should avoid and how they affect the success of projects. In addition, future quantitative research could be undertaken to determine whether other factors can influence the project sponsor's decisions and the relative influence of each factor on the success of projects.

More qualitative studies need to be conducted to understand why it is difficult to influence the project sponsor's perspective on using the right project planning and scheduling practices to determine project completion dates. In addition, one can identify why project sponsor sometimes fail to learn from the previous projects' experience.

Finally, the research participants and I managed to initiate some cultural changes in the organisation. Future studies can use qualitative research approaches to investigate how firms can ensure the sustainability of cultural changes.

8.5 Summary

Managing successful projects is important to organisations. Projects enable organisations to achieve their objectives and remain competitive. Organisations invest huge capital, assign qualified project teams and hire international contractors to improve the success rate of projects. Project sponsors are supposed to assist project managers in the management of projects. They are critical in fostering the success of projects (O'Brochta, 2010). Sometimes, however, instead of supporting projects, project sponsors contribute to the projects' failure (Merrow, 2011; Melymuka, 2004). The action research approach was used to investigate the effect of the project sponsor's decisions on the success of three megaprojects. The objective was to understand how the project sponsors' decisions

affected the success of projects, identify the factors that influenced the project sponsor's decisions and explore the strategies that can help influence the project sponsor's behaviour and decisions.

The research outcomes indicated that there were three project sponsor decisions that had significant impact on the success of the projects: lowering projects' budgets to facilitate project approval, setting unrealistic project completion dates and failing to provide the needed support to projects. The research identified three major factors that led the project sponsor to make these decisions: a lack of project management knowledge and experience, the organisational culture and the absence of clear roles and responsibilities.

The action research approach helped me take actions that influenced some of the project sponsor's decisions. The research also contributes to the actionable knowledge by developing a successful project sponsorship framework. The framework guides organisations in developing project sponsors and help firms create conditions that foster project success. The framework suggests that the success of the project sponsorship depends on three parties: management, the project sponsor and the project manager. Each party should understand its role in taking the necessary actions.

The research results indicate that the management team, because they hold power, should play a vital role in promoting successful project sponsorship. They should prepare the organisational conditions that help the project sponsor succeed in his/her role. They should also establish clear roles and responsibilities for the project sponsor, hold the project sponsor accountable for the success or failure of the project and avoid the dual role of the project sponsor. Moreover, they need to ensure the continuity of the project sponsor from the start of the project until its successful completion and establish criteria to select and assign project sponsors to projects.

The project manager is in charge of managing the project's day-to-day project activities and must ensure that the assigned project sponsor is supporting the project. He/she should understand the project sponsor's expectations, keep him/her informed about the project's progress, maintain a good relationship with the project sponsor to gain trust, use direct or indirect strategies to influence the project sponsor's decisions and sell project management to the project sponsor. The research outcomes suggest that projects managers should avoid getting into debate or conflict with the project sponsor, as doing so can damage the relationship.

As leaders, project sponsors should enhance their project management knowledge and not make any critical project decisions without involving the projects experts. They should understand that their primary role is to ensure the project's success. The project sponsor should foster the conditions to develop a project support culture so the project manager can focus on managing the daily project

activities. In addition, the research results suggested that the project sponsor should give priority to achieving the project interests over his/her own personal interests.

Finally, I enjoyed this research journey and I recommend that scholars and practitioners interested in studying project management topics or the project sponsor's role use the action research approach. Action research is an excellent approach; it helped me take actions to resolve some of the projects' delay issues, influence the project sponsor's decisions and generate actionable knowledge. I would also like to emphasise the use of research journals. Journals help the researcher document events, reflect and learn. Overall, they provide the researcher with crucial information to facilitate the learning and writing of the research report.

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A1

Participant's Consent Form

Title of Research Project Impact of the Project Sponsor's Decisions on the Success of Projects: An Action Research Study

Researcher(s): Malek Omar AlHawsah

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated 10 March 2016 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. ☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. ☐

3. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish. ☐

4. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

Participant Name	Date	Signature
Name of Person taking consent	Date	Signature
Malek O AlHawsah	10 Mar. 16	Malek
Researcher	Date	Signature

Principal Investigator:
Name
Work Telephone
Work Email

Student Researcher:
Name: Malek O mar AlHawsah
Telephone :966505903865
Email: Malek115@ Hotmail.com

- The information you have submitted will be published as a report; please indicate whether you would like to receive a copy.

- I understand that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify me in any publications**.**

- I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research and understand that any such use of identifiable data would be reviewed and approved by a research ethics committee.

- I understand and agree that my participation will be audio recorded /video recorded **(please delete as appropriate)** and I am aware of and consent to your use of these recordings for the research purposes only.

- I understand that I must not take part if… **[list exclusion criteria,]**

- I agree for the data collected from me to be used in relevant future research.

- I would like my name used and I understand and agree that what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in reports, publications and other research outputs so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognised.

- I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential **[only if true]**. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.

- I understand and agree that once I submit my data it will become anonymised and I will therefore no longer be able to withdraw my data.

FOR MARIARC PROJECTS ONLY:

- I agree that my GP may be contacted if any unexpected results are found in relation to my health.

APPENDIX A2

Participant's Information Sheet

You are kindly invited to participate in a research study. The following information will provide a summary of the research. If more information or clarifications are needed, please feel free to ask. I want to emphasis that it is your choice whether to participate or not in the study.

Research background

Completing megaprojects on time, within budget and with the required specifications is essential for all organisations. It is essential not only because organisations create assets through projects but most importantly because Megaprojects enable organisations to achieve their strategic objectives. Unfortunately, the literature indicates that many projects failed to achieve their objectives. Projects delays and cost overruns are significant concerns for many organisations. Regardless of all effort done by scholars and practitioners, universities and specialised project management bodies such as PMI and IPA, the failure of the projects is still high. In 2010, 65 % out of 300 global industrial mega projects failed to achieve their objectives (Marrow, 2011).

In an attempt to improve projects success rate organisations used multiple strategies such as implementing a matrix project organisation, used advanced project management tools and techniques, enrol the project team in a professional project management development programs and assigning a project sponsor or a steering committee to guide and provide the necessary support to the project team. Although the role and responsibilities of the project sponsor vary among organisations, the primary purpose of the sponsor assignment is to provide governance and support (Crawford et al., 2008). The purpose of the governance role is to ensure the project is complying with the organisational policies and procedures while the purpose of the support is to remove obstacles from the project way so the project team can focus on managing the day-to-day project activities. The problem will occur when the project sponsor decisions contributes to the failure of projects. Therefore, instead of supporting the project, the sponsor will add additional burden on the project team.

There is a consensus among scholars and practitioners about the importance of project sponsor role to projects success (Kloppenborg et al., 2009; Kloppenborg et al., 2014; Crawford et al., 2008; Merrow, 2011). However, little was written to uncover in depth the characteristics of sponsor role (Kloppenborg et al., 2009; Helm and Remington, 2005). Further, the limited literature written about project sponsorship focused on identifying the attributes and characteristics of effective projects sponsorship. Little was written about the sponsor's decisions and behaviours that can cause projects to delay, the factors that influence the sponsor to act in a certain way and why sometimes sponsors reiterate decisions that previously contributed to projects delay.

To bridge this knowledge gap, this study aims to understand how the project sponsor decisions and behaviours impact the project progress and project manager performance. The intent is to interpret the project sponsor's decisions and behaviours, identify the factors that influence the sponsor's decisions and understand their impactions on the success of the projects and explore the strategies the project team can use to influence the decisions of the project sponsor.
To accomplish this objective, this study attempts to use a qualitative research methodology using an action research approach. Action learning or action research is one of the recent forms of personal and organizational development (Peddler, 2008). The action learning process provides the opportunity for practitioners to conduct scientific and rigours research at their own organisation. Action research is a collaborative and participative process whose aim is to take actions toward

resolving real organisational issues and provide learning from the process (Greenwood and Levin, 2007).

The population of the study will include Megaprojects managers, directors, senior executives, steering committee members and project sponsors working for leading Saudi Arabian industrial organisations in Oil &Gas, Petrochemicals, Power and Mining sectors. The sample is selected from my professional network. It will consist of project managers, project directors and project sponsor having at least 10 years of management or project management Experience.

You have the full rights to decide whether to participate or not in the study. Even, if you have decided to participate then during the study you changed your mind and elected to withdraw from the study it will be entirely your decision that will be respected. Furthermore, it is essential to understand that my role as the principal researcher for this study has nothing to do with my professional or organisational role. In all cases, our research relation will not affect our organisational relationship. You should not expect to gain additional organisational benefits because of your participation in the research. On the other hand, nothing will harm you if you selected not to participate in the study. If you decide to participate in the study, I will either contact you by phone or email to schedule the interview time at a connivance time. The interview duration will last approximately 45 min- an hour. I will record the interview. If you do not like the interview to be recorded, then I will take notes. You are free to share any related documents that you may think will add value to the study.

This is voluntary participation. If you decide to participate, you will not be reimbursement of any cost or given any compensation. However, upon the research completion, I will share the research outcomes with you. It is important to know that your name and your identity will be strictly confidential. Your name will not appear in the study and will only be known to me. The data will be stored on a password-protected computer. Only the researcher and his supervisor will have access to the data. The data will be stored for five years then it will be destroyed — there absolutely no risks or disadvantages to you for taking part in the study.

If during your participation a problem happens or if you are unhappy, please feel free to let me know by contacting: Malek AlHawsah, mobile @ 966505903865 and I will try to help. If you remain unhappy or have a complaint that you feel you cannot come to me with then, you should contact the Research Governance Officer at ethics@liv.ac.uk. When contacting the Research Governance Officer, please provide details of the name or description of the study (so that it can be identified), the researcher(s) involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make.

A copy of the results of the study will be sent to you by email. The result will be published in specialised project management referred journals. Participants will be given the names of the journals that will publish the study. The expected benefits of the study will include:
A better understanding of projects sponsorship role.

Knowledge about the behaviours that project sponsor should avoid
Understand the factors that influence the project sponsor decisions and behaviours
At which situations, the project sponsors should exercise the governance role and when he should exercise the support role.
The best way projects sponsors spend their limited time during the project life phases.
The strategies the project team can use to influence the decisions of the project sponsor.

If you have any further questions, you can contact: Name: Malek AlHawsah, Address: Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Mobile, and KSA: 966505903865

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B 1

Summary of Research Studies Related to the Project Sponsor's Role

Authors	Research Objectives	Literature Gaps (Areas That Are Not Explored)
Hall et al. (2003)	Understand project sponsors' perceptions about benchmarking and performance measurement for public projects.	This research did not examine the factors that influence the project sponsor's decisions or articulate how the project sponsor could cause projects to fail.
Melymuka (2004)	Identify the best strategies for working with dysfunctional project sponsors.	This study presented various strategies that project managers could use to work with project sponsors. However, it did not explain how the project sponsor influences projects, nor were the factors that may influence the project sponsor's decisions and actions discussed. Also, the study did not provide suggestions for developing project sponsors.
Helm and Remington (2005)	Understand the key roles of project sponsors in projects.	This research identified the key roles and characteristics of the project sponsor. However, it did not address how project sponsors could impact projects or discuss the factors that may influence the project sponsor's decisions.
Cooke-Davies (2005)	Understand how the project sponsor could enable mature project organisations.	The study did not explain how project sponsors could influence projects' success or the factors that may influence the project sponsor's actions. Also, how to develop project sponsors was not covered.
Kloppenborg et al. (2006)	Identify and validate a set of executive sponsor behaviours necessary for a successful project initiation phase.	This study did not identify the tasks that project sponsors need to avoid at the project initiation phase or examine what factors could influence the project sponsor's actions. Also, the study did not discuss the strategies project managers could use to work with various types of project sponsors.

Authors	Research Objectives	Literature Gaps (Areas That Are Not Explored)
Kloppenborg et al. (2007)	Identify differences in perceptions between executive sponsors and project managers regarding sponsor involvement in projects.	This study provided recommendations about the key responsibilities of the project sponsor. However, it did not discuss how the project sponsor could impact projects, the factors that may influence the project sponsor's decisions or the strategies project managers could use to work with project sponsors.
Bryde (2008)	Explore how project sponsorship activities can be classified and how such activities impact perceived project success.	This study tried to identify the activities the project sponsor performs in projects and the impact of these activities on projects' success. However, it did not demonstrate how each activity could influence projects' success or examine how project managers could influence project sponsors who take decisions that may affect projects' success.
Crawford et al. (2008)	Define the role of the project sponsor in projects and programmes. Defined the role and responsibilities of the sponsor within corporate and project governance frameworks and identified the characteristics of effective performance of the sponsor role.	The study did not discuss the project sponsor's decisions that could lead projects to fail. Also, the study did not identify the factors that may influence the project sponsor's decisions.
Lechler and Cohen (2009)	Define the role of the project steering committee in projects.	This study analysed the specific functions of project steering committees. However, it did not explain how the steering committee and the project sponsor, as the chair of the committee, could impact projects' success.

Authors	Research Objectives	Literature Gaps (Areas That Are Not Explored)
O'Brochta (2010)	Identify strategies for dealing with project sponsors.	This study described how project managers can get their executives to act and identify the top 10 executive actions most likely to contribute to project success. However, the study did not explain how the project sponsor's decisions could impact projects' success.
Kloppenborg et al. (2011)	Investigate the sponsor's role in the project planning phase.	This study did not identify the tasks that project sponsors need to avoid at the project planning phase, nor did it examine what factors could influence the project sponsor's actions. Also, the study did not discuss the strategies project managers could use to work with various types of project sponsors.
Merrow (2011)	Identify the causes that lead industrial megaprojects to fail.	This study provided seven mistakes that executives make that lead to project failures. However, it only partially discussed how these mistakes can lead projects to fail. Also, the study did not discuss the strategies project managers can use to work with project sponsors who make bad decisions.
James et al. (2013)	Identify strategies for project sponsorship.	The study provided strategies to work with various types of project sponsors. It listed some behaviours that project sponsors should avoid. However, it did not demonstrate how these behaviours can impact projects' success.
Kloppenborg et al. (2014)	Investigate project success and executive sponsor behaviours via empirical life cycle stage investigations.	This study did not identify the tasks that project sponsors need to avoid during the project's life cycle or examine what factors could influence the project sponsor's actions. Also, the study did not discuss the strategies that project managers could use to work with various types of project sponsors.

Authors	Research Objectives	Literature Gaps (Areas That Are Not Explored)
Kloppenborg and Tesch (2015)	Identify the behaviours that project sponsors should practise in each project phase.	This study identified the behaviours that project sponsors should embrace to help projects succeed. However, it did not discuss the behaviours that project sponsors should avoid or how bad behaviours and decisions could influence projects' success.

APPENDIX B 2

Summary of the Case Study Research Methods

Authors	Research Objectives	Research Methods
Takey and Carvalho (2015)	Develop a seven-step method for the project management competency map.	Documentation, behavioural event interviews, self-assessment surveys.
Johnson et al. (2014)	Understand good energy management practices in shipping companies to increase energy efficiency.	Interviews, focus group.
Pino et al. (2013)	Use action research to manage and develop software engineering distributed research projects.	Controlled experiments, surveys and interviews.
Dawson (2011)	Examine teacher technology integration practices to influence classroom-based learning.	Focus group.
Fuller et al. (2010)	Develop a new approach to capture project-based learning.	Questionnaire-based survey.
Azhar et al. (2010)	Improve access to information to support planning and decision-making in a construction owner organisation through designing and implementing a data warehouse.	Questionnaire survey, focus group.
Benn and Dunphy (2009)	Integrate sustainability into core subjects in the MBA programme at an Australian university.	Interviews, documentation.
Iacono et al. (2008)	Investigate the factors affecting the viability of electronic marketplaces in international steel trading.	Participant observation, documentation, archival records.

Authors	Research Objectives	Research Methods
Crawford et al. (2008)	Address both formal and informal aspects of the sponsorship role and provide guidance to organisations and professional organisations by defining the role and responsibilities of the sponsor.	Interview.
Hartmann et al. (2008)	Develop and implement information systems to support architecture, engineering and construction (AEC) projects.	Observation.
Azhar (2007)	Study and implement an executive information system (EIS) in a construction owner organisation.	Survey, focus group.
Dymond et al. (2006)	Redesign a high school science course to incorporate the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and to promote access to the general curriculum.	Documents, interviews and focus groups.
Whitehead (2005)	Compare the action research methodology with project management methodology. The researcher confirmed that there are similarities and differences between the two methods.	Documentation.
Sullivan et al. (2005)	Understand the cultural context of domestic violence. Examine access to and satisfaction with the range of services for women who are battered in nine communities. Identify women's ideas for addressing domestic violence in their communities.	Focus groups and interviews.

Authors	Research Objectives	Research Methods
Parker and Mobey (2004)	Identify the risk of introducing an electronic document management system and build a framework to understand risks associated with IT projects.	Interview.
Hall et al. (2003)	Examine project sponsors' views about the benchmarking process to identify how to improve the performance of projects.	Interview.
Davison and Vogel (2000)	Use a group support system (GSS) to support a process improvement project in a Hong Kong accounting firm.	Observations, documentation.
Tellis (1997)	Assess aspects of the rapid introduction of information technology at an institution.	Interviews.
Markus (1981)	Examine the use of a "production planning and profit analysis system" in two manufacturing plants within the same division of a company. The system was readily accepted in one plant but was at first strongly rejected in the other.	Interview.

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C 1

C1 Phase One Questions

1. What do you think went wrong in these projects?
2. What would you like to have seen done differently in these projects? Why
3. In your view, what are the top causes that affected the projects progress? How
4. How do you see the role of the project sponsor in these projects? Why
5. To what extend do you think the Project sponsor provided support to these projects? Explain
6. In your view , how do you see the relation between the project sponsor and the PMT
7. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

C2 Expert Panel Questions

1. Can you provide some information about yourself (experience, qualifications, industry, role in projects…)
2. In your view, what do you think the role of the project sponsor in projects?
3. What are some of the behaviours/decisions the project sponsor practice that may impact the success of projects? Can you explain how these behaviours/decisions could impact projects success?
4. What is your view about the decisions taken by the project sponsor?
5. What are the causes that influenced the decisions of the project sponsor?
6. How can the project team influence the decisions of the project sponsor?
7. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

APPENDIX C 2

Issues Affecting the Success of the Projects

Serial No.	What went wrong (actions, decisions, behaviors)	Responsibility	Project Phase
1	Awards contracts to cheap contractors	Project Sponsor	Procurement
2	SOME of the PMC resources lake of technical experience	Project Manager/PMT	Procurement
3	The project completion dates were set before completing the engineering	Project Sponsor	Development
4	Set project budget before completing enough engineering	Project Sponsor	Development
5	Fast-tracking the projects	Project Sponsor	Development
6	Having A Project Team who lack the technical experience in such types of projects	Project Sponsor	Development
7	Did not consider the effect of the weather on the project schedule	Contractor/PMT	Planning
8	Delay in contract awards after sending the LOI	Project Sponsor /PMT	Procurement
9	Multiple price negotiations with bidders	Project Sponsor	Procurement
10	Delay in taking decisions	Project Sponsor	Development & Execution
11	Conflicts between the project team and Operations	PMT/Operations	Development & Execution
12	Delay in ordering long lead equipment	Project Sponsor	Procurement
13	Delay in mobilizing critical project resources	Project Sponsor	Development & Execution
14	The quality of the construction contractor resources	Project Manager/PMT	Construction
15	The delay in mobilizing the construction resources	Project Sponsor/Contractor	Construction
16	Lack of coordination between the project development department and the Project Execution department	Project Director/Developme nt Director	Development & Execution
17	Shortage of project offices to accommodate the project resources	Project Sponsor	Development
18	The scope was not fully defined during the bidding	Project manager/Operations	Development
19	Failure to follow the project procedure	Project manager/Operations	Development & Execution

Serial No.	What went wrong (actions, decisions, behaviors)	Responsibility	Project Phase
20	Lack of clear roles and responsibilities among parties involved in managing the project	Project sponsor	Development & Execution
	Operations were not involved during the development stage	Project Director / Project sponsor	Development
21	Lack of standard specifications for infrastructure and common facilities	Project Director/PMT	Development
22	Failure to select proper execution strategy considering process options and available market conditions	Project sponsor	Development
23	Long Bid Times	Procurement	Procurement
24	Lack of Vendors prequalification process	Procurement	Procurement
25	The contract deliverables were not well fully defined.	PMT/Operations	Development
26	Equipment custom clearance delays	Contractor/ Government	Construction
27	time gap between LOI/NTP and Contract	Procurement /Project Sponsor	Procurement
28	Scope changes after contract awards	Operations	Construction
29	Not adhering to the change procedure	PMT/Operations	Construction
30	The Project team was not located in the overseas contractor office during engineering	Project Director	Engineering
31	Delay in review and providing technical comments on engineering submittals	Project Manager/Operations	Engineering
32	Some of the equipment specifications were not clear	Project Manager/Operations	Engineering
33	Issues related to the EPC contractor: Lack of supervision, insufficient resources, lack of proper project management	contractor	Construction
34	Failure to first construct access road to facilitate the logistics	Project Manager	Construction
35	The bad weather affected the field fabrications	Contractor	Construction
36	Delay in issuing construction license" from the authorized authorities	Government	Construction
37	The project schedule did not account for all logistics and risks	Contractor	Planning
38	Operations priorities were not fully addressed at the scope development stage	Project Manager/Operations	Development

Serial No.	What went wrong (actions, decisions, behaviors)	Responsibility	Phase
39	Conflict of interest, the project sponsor is also responsible for the department operating the plant	Project sponsor's Manager	Development & Execution
40	Operation Rep was not available during the execution phase	Operations	Execution
41	Lack of team spirit , the project and operations were not cooperating	Project Director/Operations	Development & Execution
42	Subcontracting works to unqualified subcontractors	Contractor/Project Manager	Construction
43	Interface in the PMT Project responsibilities	Project Sponsor	Development &Execution
44	Limited or late support from other functions such as HR ,finance and procurement	Project Sponsor	Development &Execution
45	Contractor delay in receiving visas from labour office due to partial contract award	Project Sponsor/contractor	Construction
46	Weather conditions, Sand storms are normal in this area. The EPC contract is losing around a day each week because of the bad weather	Contractor	Construction
47	Communication issues between PMT and Construction contractor	Project Manager	Construction
48	Discipline Engineers were not resident at site during the construction	Project Director	Engineering
49	Operations did not witness or participate in Factory Acceptance test of some of the critical equipment and devices	Project Manager	Procurement
Serial No.	What went wrong (actions, decisions, behaviors)	Responsibility	Phase
50	Other owner teams such as LAB, IT, Maintenance, General Services were not requested to provide comments on facilities related to their area of specialty	Operations	Development
51	Some buildings were constructed nearby the blasting zone ,this led to cracks developed in some of the nearby buildings	Engineering/Project Manager	Engineering
52	Operations did not clearly convey their priorities to the PMT(e.g. lab to be built first before the plant)	Operations	Development
53	Lack of proper construction tools	Contractor	Construction

Serial No.	What went wrong (actions, decisions, behaviors)	Responsibility	Phase
54	Key Project resources were not provided on Time	Project Sponsor	Development &Execution
55	Ignorance ,Limited project management knowledge and management skills to perform the Project Sponsor Role	Project sponsor	Development & Execution
56	Lack of support from the project sponsor to the PMT	Project Sponsor	Development & Execution
57	Payments delays	Finance	Development & Execution
58	Late minute Requests	Project Sponsor	Development & Execution
59	Lack of communications, management designs are not communicated in time to the project team	Project Sponsor	Development & Execution
60	Lack of trust in the capabilities of the PM	Project Sponsor	Development & Execution
61	Misunderstanding of the role of project manager and contracting	Project sponsor	Development & Execution
62	Discontinuity of the sponsor, Different sponsors each has his own way of managing	Project sponsor's manager	Development & Execution
63	Lack of a system (identifying, implementing, KPI, tracking,…..) to document and to transfer the lessons learned from one project to another	Operations	Development & Execution
64	Misunderstanding of the project environment & Culture	Operations	Development & Execution
65	Requesting and Taking unrealistic decisions	Project Sponsor	Development & Execution
66	The Project Sponsor is acting as an auditor	Project sponsor	Execution
67	Take things personal	Project Director/Project Sponsor	Development & Execution
68	Lack of Empowerment Low level of Authority that allows the project to progress, this will force the PT every time to go back to PS	Project Sponsor	Development & Execution

Serial No.	What went wrong (actions, decisions, behaviors)	Responsibility	Phase
69	Always critiques, no appreciation for the project team. This will affect the morale of the team.	The project sponsor	Development & Execution
70	Though they say time is money but their practice does not support what they are saying. They do not feel that time is money, they do not practice	Project Sponsor	Development & Execution
71	Failure to realize the impact of late decisions on the project	The Project sponsor	Development & Execution
72	Conflict of interest, Project Sponsor Dual Role	The project sponsor	Development & Execution
73	The Project sponsor did not have the right authority to hire or fire	The Project Sponsor's Manager	Development & Execution
74	The project sponsor was not accountable about the project performance	The Project Sponsor's Manager	Development & Execution
75	Criticise the team rather than encouragement	The project sponsor	Development & Execution
76	Biased, not standing in an equal distance from projects and operations	The project sponsor	Development & Execution
77	Ensure the project execution stage has enough time	Project director/project manager	Development & Execution
78	Lack of a system to select project sponsors	The project sponsor's manager	Development & Execution

APPENDIX C 3

Key Categories and Associated Issues

Responsible	Theme	Issues
Project Sponsor	Support	Limited interventions to facilitate support from other functions such as HR, finance and procurement to the PMT.
		Lack of trust. Do not trust the capabilities of the PMT(Always critiques, no appreciation)
	Communication	Lack of communications, management decisions including the rationales are not communicated to the project team.
		Last minute Requests
	Project Execution Strategy	Did not select the optimum strategy and failed to comply with the requirements of the selected project strategy.
		Projects Fast Truck
		Refused to advance the procurement of the long leads
	Logistics	Failure to realize the importance of having enough offices to accommodate the project team & PMC in one place.
		Did not realize the impact of delaying the construction of the access roads
	Decision Making	Unrealistic decisions (Determining project completion dates in advance before completing the engineering, Set project budget before completing enough engineering).
		Late Decisions.
		Taking decisions without conducting proper risk analysis to identify and control risks (e.g. Partial Contract Award)
	Bids Negotiations	Multiple price negotiations. Conducting two rounds of negotiations with bidders one by the PMT another by the Project Sponsor to lower the potential bidders' price introduced quality issues to projects
	Mobilization of key projects resources	Delay in mobilizing Key project resources(PM, Engineers)
		Appointment of a Project Team who lack the technical expertise in such types of projects.
	Governance (Roles and Responsibilities	Misunderstanding of the role of project manager and contracting.
		Could not recognize the importance of Operations involvement before finalizing the project scope of work.
		Lack of clear roles and responsibilities among parties supporting the project.

Responsible	**Category**	**Issues**
PMT	Contractors' Technical Qualifications	Recruited some PMC resources who lake of relevant technical expertise.
		Did not conduct enough due diligence to prequalify subcontractors.
		Does not have shortlisting process of material suppliers and service providers.
	Work Location	The Project team was not located in the overseas contractor office during engineering
		Discipline Engineers were not resident full time at site during the construction.
	Interpersonal relations (Team Work)	Could not contain and manage operations' behaviors.
		Enter into conflict with the Steering Committee and Project Sponsor.
		Could not manage the expectation of the operation team.
	Documentation	Did not document well all Project Sponsors requests to PMT.
	Engineering , Construction & Testing	Office Building proximity from the blasting area led to cracks in the walls.
		Operations did not witness or participate in Factory Acceptance test of some of the critical equipment and devices.
		Failure to recognize all risks during the HAZOP study.
		Failure to conduct proper sites tests and inspections.
		Lack of standard specifications for infrastructure.
		Did not conduct risk assessment before selecting new technologies.

Responsible	Category	Issues
The Project Sponsor's Manager	Lack of Project Sponsor selection system	The project sponsor was not accountable for the project performance
		Conflict of interest, Project Sponsor Dual Role (Head of the SC and Head of Operations)
		The Project sponsor did not have the right authority to hire or fire
		Assignment of project sponsors who lack of project management experience
	Discontinuity of the Project Sponsor	The Assignment of three different project sponsors during the project life cycle with each having his own way of managing affected the performance of the project
Operations	Compliance with the Project Procedure	Failure to comply with the requirements of the project procedure
		Scope changes after contract awards (not adhering to the change procedure).
		Full-Time Operation Reps were not available during the execution phase.

	Engineering & Tests Participations	Delay in review and providing technical comments on engineering submittals
		Other owner teams such as LAB, IT, Maintenance, General Services were not requested to provide comments on facilities related to their area of specialty. Consequently, lot of changes were introduced during construction

Responsible	Category	**Issues**
Operations	Operations priorities	Operations priorities were not fully addressed during the development stage(Operations did not clearly convey their priorities to the PMT(e.g. lab to be built first before the plant)
	Team Work	Lack of team spirit , the project and operations were not cooperating or working as a team
	Lessons Learnt from Previous Projects	The absence of a documented lessons learned from previous projects.
EPC	Resources	Lack of proper construction tools
		Some of the Contractor resources were not technically qualified
		Subcontracting works to unqualified subcontractors
		Most of the contractors' resources do not speak English that affected the communication with the PMT
		insufficient resources
	Management	Lack of supervision, , lack of proper project management
		Accepting the owners proposed project timeline, though they know it is aggressive and may not be achieved.
		Corruption, the EPC contractor sometimes is not paying the subcontractors on time

Responsible	Category	**Issues**
EPC	Planning & Scheduling	Poor tracking & minoring
		The project schedule did not account for all logistics and risks such as weather and remote area
		Did not follow the accepted planning and scheduling practices while preparing the project schedule
		Did not build the loading factor on the activities, some of the activities reflect greater/less than other activities on project total progress
Project Development Department (PDD)	Scope	The scope was not fully defined during the bidding.
	Teamwork	Lack of coordination with the PMT and teamwork.
Procurement	Procedures	Awards contracts to lowest bidders. Lowest bidders, if not technically competent, will introduce troubles to projects (no technically approved bidders' exclusion system)
		Long bid times (time gap between LOI/NTP and Contract).
		Lack of vendor prequalification process
Government	New Regulations	New port regulations affected equipment's customs clearance. Trucks can work only with their legal sponsor.
	Routine	Delay in issuing construction permits
PMC	Systems and Procedures	The PMC's lack of a system and procedure to manage and monitor the EPC contractor work
	Resources qualifications	The PMC did not provide resources with relevant technical knowledge and expertise
Finance	Payment	Payment delays